

THE SINGLE EYE

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THE SINGLE EYE

by

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The Bishop of Pittsburgh

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FOR VERLINDA

In December, 1946, I was called to our diocesan hospital to see a newborn, dying baby and her mother. The infant was baptized Verlinda; a more beautiful baby we had not seen. The doctors told us that death was certain unless some kind of miracle occurred. I found a nurse on the case who believed in the power of prayer. We prayed together frequently without asking that the physical life be saved, but by affirming that whatever happened to the body, the soul was strong and unharmed and would continue to grow and prosper. There was one day when life and death were separated only by minutes, but she survived.

Months went by, and when next I heard of Verlinda she had cerebral palsy and was blind, deaf, and without speech. All of us who were close to her returned to our prayers of the days when she was not expected to live, prayers expressing our faith that the personality was strong and well and as normal as any infant could possibly be. Her problem was to express herself through her impaired and temporary physical body. It would take unbelievable patience, courage, and faith on her part as well as that of her parents.

Verlinda continues to fight the good fight against unparalleled odds and has made marked progress to overcome the limitations of her physical body, aided by her parents and a dedicated nurse. Her inner character and her battle for expression have made her a mighty force. She has influenced the lives of many hundreds of people who have been inspired by her example and that of her parents. Many prayer groups and healing study groups have been formed through her fight toward victory. God alone knows how far her life has reached to give people a deeper understanding of the mystery of suffering.

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A. P.

I

FAITH AND FEAR

I

THE SINGLE EYE

THE BIBLE is full of hidden powers. You can't even imagine the spiritual dynamite that is packed into its pages. There stands the Bible, open for everyone to read. The power is promised by Christ Himself. Where do you stand in relationship to it?

God is wise. He gives us this Book to learn by heart if we want to—but He does not open up His secrets until we are ready for them. Sometimes they can be understood by innocent little children, and at the same time withheld from brilliant theological professors. Wisdom and understanding do not require college degrees and higher education. Spiritual power requires much higher qualities—faith and humility.

When you are ready, God will open His secrets to you. Here is one that was opened to me the other day. Jesus said: "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. . . . If therefore the

light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6:22-23).

The text has a real message for me and I hope it has for you. There is an enormous secret hidden inside it. I know only a small part of it, but believe me—it can change your whole life.

Our Lord tells us that life is a matter of the focus of the lenses of heart and mind on the right thoughts and actions. Time and again He repeats this point in different ways. Most of us do one of three things as we focus our energies upon life. First, we may be so fickle and scatterbrained that we never concentrate long enough on any one point to get a clear and constructive result. Too many of us today are nervous, neurotic, and frustrated. We are dizzy from looking at too many things—thus, we never get a clear picture of anything. Secondly, we may focus upon the wrong things. We dwell on some phase of selfishness, destructiveness, or fear until we are destroyed by the evil of our own outlook.

Thirdly, we may focus upon that which is right, good, and constructive. The result is that we then create good pictures of life which turn into joy, courage, sacrifice, health, and strength.

Christ is direct and clear-cut in telling us that the mind's eye is the all-important criterion of a

man's future. In the twenty-second verse of the sixth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, our Lord deals specifically with this subject. A revealing Greek word is used. It is *haplous*, which means the giving of one's attention to an object or singleness of vision—or keeping your eye on the ball. The principle that Christ teaches time and again is that the thing we believe in our hearts—the thing we focus upon—will come true in our lives. And what we believe in our hearts we must have first concentrated upon with our minds, thoughts, and imaginations.

That is a simple teaching, isn't it? Anyone can understand it. It is as basic as "two and two make four." Perhaps our difficulty is that it is almost too simple. We can't quite believe that most of the bad fruits we produce with our lives are the direct results of the bad seeds we have consciously or unconsciously planted through thoughts and attitudes. It is difficult for people to see and believe this, for they insist on blaming their bad fruits on other people's faults or on rotten breaks. Even the most scholarly will often fail to examine the seeds planted in their hearts to account for the tragedies that have happened in their lives. That is why Jesus warned against the tragedy of spiritual blindness,

for there is little hope for a man who refuses to look at his own life with honesty.

There is no greater objective in religion than to be honest with the Christ who dwells in the cave of your own soul. If your mind's eye or imagination is focused upon destructive thoughts, your whole life will be full of darkness.

I had a talk with a man the other day who is on the verge of a mental and physical breakdown. Furthermore, he may be fired from a job that has promised to be a brilliant opportunity. Why? Because he lacks ability? No, but because he has focused his eyes on the wrong things. He is jealous of another man in the company. Instead of having a single eye upon his job and giving it all of his outstanding abilities, he watches the other fellow.

Job stated my friend's case exactly when he said, "The thing that I fear cometh upon me." My friend watches every move this other man makes and does so with suspicion, jealousy, and resentment. The other fellow, who is less able, got the promotion. Now my friend is in a fit of deep bitterness and it reflects in his work. For Jesus said, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness."

If you are not satisfied with life as it now exists

for you, I suggest that you learn how to look into your heart and see what you have planted inside.

The vast majority of troubles we have are of our own conscious or unconscious creation. They are the ones that have come into being because of our selfishness, pride, resentment, jealousy, self-pity, and the like. Believe me, they are cancers of the soul. They will destroy you.

How can you get rid of them? Not by your own will power to change your habits of thought. It is not that easy. You get rid of them by first being aware of them. Secondly, by asking God to forgive them and to destroy them. They are too powerful—too powerful for you, but not for God. Thirdly, by asking for grace or strength to keep free of them. Fourthly, by asking God to fill your mind with good thoughts and desires.

So, remember what Jesus said, "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. . . . If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" But, said Jesus also, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

2

SARAH LAUGHED

YOU CANNOT intellectually comprehend or rationalize the power of God. Saint Paul says it thus: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). God's programs and processes are for the most part a mystery. The operation of His physical universe, as far as the scientists can yet discern, is largely an unknown quantity. Most scientists admit that they have but scratched the surface of knowledge in their researches. Enormous progress has been made, and yet they do not even understand the nature of electricity. We know what it can do, to a large degree. We know how to make practical use of it—but we cannot explain it.

Even greater than the physical mysteries are the spiritual enigmas. Life is overladen with strange twists in human events. There seems to be some kind of fateful mechanism, not understood by men,

which irrationally brings good or bad experiences. Why is this so? For centuries man has tried to explain the mysteries of pleasure and pain, good and evil, both in philosophy and theology, but he hasn't gone very far. Even Job himself never found the full answer to the problem of pain.

Again St. Paul tells us: "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. 3:19). All the combined brains of this little two-legged dust speck called "Man" do not seem to add up to very much. But though we do not fully understand the operation of His universe, we do have enough knowledge, through Christ, to draw upon His unlimited power so that it can be put to practical use for our needs. Our interest here concerns several of the methods by which we can draw upon God's power to help us through the problems that are too great for us to solve alone. One of these methods is prayer. We will deal with several important but small parts of the vast subject of prayer as it applies to the needs of the world and of individuals.

First, however, let's take note of one danger that so many of us have fallen into: namely, that of limiting the power and effectiveness of prayer before we even start by trying to over-rationalize some of the seemingly incredible "mighty acts"

recorded in the Bible. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed . . . nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matt. 17:20). In connection with this problem I direct your attention to an episode in the life of Abraham and Sarah which has dramatic interest and an underlying sense of humor, reminding us of the "Almightiness" of God.

According to the ancient Bible report, Abraham was 100 years of age and Sarah but a few years younger. They were without a son and heir to carry out their spiritual and material commitments. Sarah even went so far as to advise Abraham to take Hagar, her handmaiden, for a wife and he did so, but the plan did not work out to their satisfaction.

Then God gave Abraham the spectacular news that Sarah was to bear him a son in spite of their age. The very thought of it made Abraham laugh for sheer joy—"Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed" (Gen. 17:17). God did not rebuke him for laughing, for He fully understands the motives of men and apparently this was a case of unbridled delight.

Not so with Sarah. She first heard the surprising news from three strangers of high spiritual significance who suddenly appeared out of nowhere. She listened to their conversation from behind a tent

flap as they discussed the miracle with Abraham. When they stated that Sarah was to have a son, she found it incredible. Her reaction was human: "Therefore Sarah laughed" (Gen. 18:12).

Her laughter was motivated by doubt and cynicism rather than joy, and God immediately chided her, saying, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:14). Furthermore, He asked her why she laughed. She, poor lady, tried to deny that she had done so "for she was afraid." And who wouldn't be? But God said, "Nay, but thou didst laugh."

Any real evidence of a sense of humor about one's self is always a sign of some degree of humility, and God must have appreciated it in both of them. Probably their sense of humor saved them. He who can see nothing funny about himself is beset by the curse of a swollen ego. What is funnier than the clown who imitates a pompous egoist?

Sarah believed, after those few words from the Lord, and He let her off with kindness, for He didn't even mention her sin of eavesdropping. The sin of doubt was what He was concerned with. So never again would she forget His rebuke, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" And Isaac was born soon thereafter.

There is no greater disrespect toward God than to place limitations on His power by petty rationalizations. The affirmation of every believer must be, "There is nothing too hard for the Lord."

3

NOTHING IS TOO HARD

BECAUSE Sarah was ninety years of age, she laughed, rather irreverently, I suspect, at the news that God was to make it possible for her and Abraham to have a son. What is more, the prospective father was reported to have been 100 years old at the time. It does sound ridiculous, doesn't it? You and I can hardly blame her for snickering behind the tent flap.

To the person who looks at religion only through the eyes of calculating reason, God's promises may all appear ridiculous. The seemingly extravagant statements concerning prayer are almost too much to be believed by a person who has been raised to rely only upon certain types of readily demonstrable proofs. Sometimes it is difficult to accept statements made by the Master, such as "Ask, and it shall be given you"; "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"; "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need

of, before ye ask him"; "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

The trouble is that the more you try to rationalize the promises of Christ, the more you get confused and tend to look upon them as legendary sayings, feeling that He didn't really quite intend to fulfill them. You may develop a spiritual paralysis through your critical analysis.

Some years ago, Dimitri Mitropoulos was conductor of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra and dined at our rectory after a concert. I asked him if he could account for or explain the electrical effect that he had upon his players and his audience. He said, "No, I cannot answer that and I won't try lest I become like the centipede who had a hundred legs and was very proud of them. One day a little insignificant bug came up to him and with the greatest humility and admiration asked if he would mind telling him which leg he moved first when he began to walk. The centipede swelled up with even greater pride and began to make an analysis of the question, watching closely his many legs to see which moved first. From that day forward, he was never able to walk again."

For the person who needs the help of God and is humble enough to recognize that need, it would be

wise to accept His great promises about prayer and at least try them as an experiment rather than first dissect them by critical analysis. When we try too hard to pick to pieces His "mighty acts" and promises, we may never obtain the faith to be helped. "We walk by faith" (2 Cor. 5:7).

There are certain basic points about prayer that require faith if our petitions are to be effective, but before these points are discussed, it is first essential that we firmly adhere to the great premise of prayer, namely, that God always answers all of our prayers. There is *never* a prayer uttered in the name of Christ that is not attended to by a definite response.

The four general ways by which God always answers prayer are these:

1. Yes.
2. No.
3. Wait.
4. I have something better for you.

The answers that God gives us when we pray are often a mystery. They come to us through the events of the times and rarely by such clear-cut definition as I have just stated. Furthermore, it is well to remember that He may give a "no" answer which can last for a good many earthly years, even

to death. His will may appear to us in the form of a suffering cross that we are asked to carry for a long time. Yet, for the most part, those of us who seek the will of God generally find that "all things work together for good," even on this earth. If our response to a cross we may have to bear is in the spirit of obeying His will, we can be assured that eventually, in this life or the next, we will receive our reward. That is good Christian doctrine. Certainly he who bears his cross with dignity and an undying faith will acquire real spiritual stature, and what greater possession can one achieve!

We can best explain God's answers to prayer by relating a true story in which all four elements appear: the "yes," the "no," the "wait," and the "I have something better for you."

Twenty-five years ago, a young clergyman, whom we shall call George, went from a Midwestern city to a missionary field in one of the most northerly posts in the United States. It got as cold as 40° below zero. There was no passenger railroad within ninety miles of his church, and the surrounding country was made up of burnt-over timberland, plus endless piles of ugly overburden which came from strip iron ore mining. The community was wonderful, the people were extraordi-

narily fine, and George did a good job for a few years. However, he became restless and feared that he would never return to city life. He failed to appreciate his post and deliberately sought work elsewhere.

He was almost unknown in church circles outside of his own diocese, so he wrote east to a young clerical friend who had "contacts." He asked for help in finding another parish, and by return mail he was informed that he had been recommended for a beautiful church in a magnificent suburb of Boston where a famed college stood directly across the street. He took the trip all the way east, met with the vestry, and impressed them to the point of getting a call for himself.

The "call committee" said that two mere formalities stood in the way. First, the Bishop needed to be consulted, and, secondly, they wanted a letter of recommendation from a well-known clergyman who was acquainted with their parish as well as with the applicant. (It is bad form to admit that you are "applying" for a call, but nevertheless that is what he was doing.)

On his way back to the Northwest, George called on the well-known rector who was surprised to hear that this prized church was vacant. He

listened to the news and the request from George with interest. He promised to write a good letter.

Our young parson went back to his post in the Northwest, told his secret to a few of his closest friends who in turn told his secret to a few of their closest friends, and soon the secret was public property.

George waited with confidence while his wife, a wonderful realist, refused to pack or plan. But at the end of three weeks the call had not arrived. So he wired east to the senior warden. A letter soon came with appropriate apologies informing him that the Bishop felt that the young man did not quite fit the post because of his inadequate training and background. What a blow! God said, "No." (What is more, the Bishop was right.) But our friend didn't take it too well. He did not accept it as God's will, but merely thought of the Bishop as narrow-minded, stuffy, and prejudiced against men from the Northwest.

So instead of going to the beautiful and cultured Eastern parish, his next post was in a part of the world that was close to the dust bowl. Amid a fine and sturdy people, he and his family lived through some of the most devastating storms in history. What is more, the man who was called to be rector

of the Eastern parish—and accepted—was the very clergyman whom George had asked to write the letter of recommendation.

However, it wasn't too long before George overcame his disappointment and drowned his bitterness in active work in his new parish. He said his prayers and forgot the whole thing. God then took hold of him, disciplined him with some very difficult situations, and fashioned out a career of service which reads almost like a highly imaginative piece of fiction. Had God told George in advance of the superb plan that was ahead of him, he probably—like Sarah—would have broken into uproarious laughter—out of sheer disbelief and cynicism.

“Is there anything too hard for the Lord?” Never—providing that the person who prays does so believing that God will answer his prayers in one of four ways, and knowing that eventually God will bless him richly “in the fullness of time.”

However, let us remember that in this life there is not always a happy ending as was experienced by George. Some people to whom God says “No” are called upon to lead an entire life of sacrifice and suffering. Why? We don't know. Generally speaking, “all things work together for good,” but, as I say, every Christian must be prepared for a big

“no” answer, and it may continue throughout this earthly life. Nevertheless, the long point of view of the Christian is that certain victory lies ahead for him who tries to bear his cross with joy and his good fortune with humility.

4

RELIGION IS FOR THE WEAK

THE primary reason for practicing religion is the simple fact that a person cannot live without God. Speaking for myself, I know that I cannot get along on my own steam or strength; I must have the resources coming from a Power greater than I. To be sure, I readily confess that on occasions I've been puffed up like a toad, but I've been slapped down enough times to know that of myself I am nothing. I must have God.

There are some who claim that turning to God out of a sense of personal inadequacy is nothing but a form of spiritual selfishness, and as such is something to be avoided. Personally, I cannot go along with that view. Are you being selfish when, because you are hungry, you go to the dining room for supper? Or are you selfish when, weary after a day's work, you climb into bed in search of sleep? I recognize that my body has been created with physical needs, and I do not consider that I am

selfish in fulfilling them. The human personality was made with certain needs that cannot be met apart from God. There is nothing selfish in turning to God so these needs can be fulfilled.

It isn't hard to keep your balance on a bicycle so long as it is rolling; but the moment it has lost its momentum, the best cyclist in the world can't keep it from toppling over—unless someone already on the ground is ready to hold it up. Similarly, when a person enjoys good health, pleasant social relationships, and steady advancement in his profession—when, in other words, the bicycle is rolling—it's easy for him to think that he has everything under control. But let the bicycle slow down; let something happen to his health, for example, or his financial status, and immediately he discovers he must have outside help to retain his balance. He must have God.

Let me ask you a question. How strong do you think you are? Do you know? Have you a powerful opinion of yourself? How much have you suffered? Have you ever come to the end of your own self-sufficient rope and just dangled there without anything beneath to catch you? When you could no longer hang by your own strength, have you dropped into an abyss? In that condition no

human hand can reach out to help you—only the power of Christ can save you. Have you been in that spot yet? If not, perhaps you don't realize how weak you are. Until you know this, you will not even have reached the first rudiments of wisdom.

So, before you can be strong, you must realize that you cannot stand alone when the crisis comes—and it will come. If some so-called strong man tells you that religion is for the weak, you have a good answer waiting for him. The answer is, "Yes." The history of the United States is the history of leaders who found weaknesses in themselves and strength in the Lord. Rugged pioneers, presidents, generals, soldiers, sailors, statesmen, and humble citizens have not been ashamed to read their Bibles, say their prayers, and confess that of themselves they did not have the strength to save themselves. Of course we are weak without Christ. Are you strong enough to admit it?

It is possible to go along for years accepting something intellectually without actually believing it emotionally; one can give lip service to an idea for a long time without having it really touch the heart. Every Lent, for instance, I have repeated the phrase, "Almighty God, who seest that we have no

power of ourselves to help ourselves"; and as I said these words I admitted their truth. Yet it wasn't until my recent trip to the Arctic that I really understood their meaning for me.

On assignment by the United States Air Force to visit personnel stationed in Baffin Island, Newfoundland, Labrador, and Greenland, I encountered the worst flying conditions of my entire experience. On one flight we lost a motor; on another the oil-line broke; on a third the brakes froze on the landing wheels. And most of the time we were traveling through howling blizzards. It was then I came to *know*—not merely intellectually, with the top of my brain, but emotionally, down to the bottom of my Arctic boots—that "we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves."

That we are powerless to help ourselves is not a very popular idea in the United States today. On the contrary, we Americans like to think that we have the power, not only to help ourselves, but to do anything whatsoever we want to do. This, in fact, is the theme of the "self-help" books that appear by dozens on the bookshelves. "Gird up your loins," say these books, in effect; "get in the groove of right thinking, adopt positive attitudes, and have confidence in your own ability, and you

will be on the way to health, prosperity, peace of mind, and happiness."

Sooner or later, everyone who relies merely on his own ability to see him through comes to a rude awakening. Confronted by a situation where his own skill cannot help him and where his own self-confidence cannot accomplish anything, he is brought face to face with his own helplessness. And the entire edifice that he has constructed—his self-reliance, his positive thinking, his determination to succeed, even his self-respect—comes crashing to the ground.

The fact is that one's trust must be placed, not in the self, but in God. The most talented human being is weak, frail, limited; only God is strong, enduring, of limitless wisdom and power. This is the theme of innumerable passages in the Bible. Jeremiah, for example, warns: "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord." Obadiah says: "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." And St. Paul puts it this way:

"If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise."

This idea is not unique to Christianity, for God has revealed this truth to other religions. In the Koran, the book sacred to the Mohammedans, there is this phrase: "I have no power over my own weal or woe, but as Allah pleaseth." And in the Rig-Veda, the holy book of the Hindus, it is said: "I am not even mine eyelid's lord without thee." All in all, the voices of the various religions of the world unite in echoing our Lord's remark to the effect that he who exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he who humbleth himself before God shall be exalted.

The strange fact is that a man begins to have real vigor and strength once he comes to recognize that he is a sinner and that there is no health in him. Once he acknowledges that he has no power of himself to help himself and that he is utterly dependent upon God, he discovers there is little he cannot accomplish. François de Fénelon expressed this in personal terms when he said, "When I thought I should be able to do everything, I was incapable of doing anything; now that I despair of myself, and have no hope left but in God, I begin to be able to do anything."

To acknowledge one's total dependence upon God does not merely bring power into one's own life; it places one's relationships to others on a new plane. Knowing that without God we are nothing, we no longer look down with an attitude of smug superiority upon those less fortunate than we; but neither do we look up with servile fear toward those who occupy positions higher than our own. We accept all men as partakers in a common humanity, sharing a common gift of life from God Himself.

Writing to the Corinthians, St. Paul reported that he had a vision in which Christ said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee"; and after this experience St. Paul went on to say, "When I am weak, then am I strong." What he meant was that when he stopped relying on himself and began to depend on God, undreamed-of strength became his. That is the great paradox of Christianity: the only way to peace, to power, to joy, and to vitality is to deny one's own self-sufficiency, to change from self-dependence to God-dependence.

The most effective appeal religion can make to you and me is on the basis of our own weakness and need. It is a man's duty to praise God in church. A man owes it to his community to support his Church. A church is a good place to meet new

people or to provide recreational opportunities for one's children. A church may need a man's business or administrative skill; but, speaking frankly, I want the Church because the Church helps me find the strength of God in my moments of weakness. The Church with its Bible and its Sacraments serves as a channel of the Divine Power when "of myself I have no power to help myself."

5

BE STRONG IN THE LORD

THE religion of our Lord as revealed in the Bible and Book of Common Prayer can be one of power and excitement for us if we will be obedient to the little revelations so frequently knocking at the door of human consciousness. As a matter of fact we are surrounded by ideas, inspirations, and visions which come to us through the many avenues that God uses: angels, archangels, the whole company of Heaven, human beings—either enemies or friends—as well as ordinary events. The Bible and the Book of Common Prayer are especially alive with living, breathing revelations for those of us who want the truth.

First, there must be established a habit of mind whereby we actually believe that truth is waiting for us, and, secondly, we must be obedient to what is revealed. It is necessary for us to accept the fact that in God's Kingdom there are no dead-end streets but that there is a way through all human difficulty. Someone has aptly said that God never closes a

door but what He opens a window. The answer comes when you are ready and willing to be led.

After serving as Bishop for my first two-year stretch, I went to our diocesan hospital with the flu, general exhaustion, and a deep sense of depression over what I thought were seemingly insurmountable problems. I could see no answer or way out. Outside of the routine of the nurses and doctors, I spent one whole day in prayer and Bible reading and felt that I had received virtually no results. I soon forgot about my day of prayer. I was having my supper and listening to a radio, when all of a sudden a text by St. Paul struck me with great luminosity. It was from the Epistle for the Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity and read, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God . . . and having done all, stand." I repeated it a number of times and suddenly realized that this was a revelation and a command. It was my spiritual duty to accept this admonition to be strong, to realize that God had already given me His grace and His presence and therefore I should use it. To do otherwise would be like owning an automobile which I allowed to stand in the garage while I was depressed because I covered the Diocese of Pittsburgh on foot. All I had

to do was to accept the use of the automobile that stood there waiting. So it is with the grace that God has given me—the power that He has placed at my very finger-tips—and it is certainly my fault if I cease to avail myself of His bounteous provision.

Some years ago a handsome and brilliant young couple walked into my church. They attended services every Sunday. They seemed rather shy and distant. They were shopping for a Church because they knew they needed God and they wanted to see where they best could find Him. They were both from well-to-do families. They were educated and attractive, but they were not getting on too well. They needed God for themselves and for the sake of their children, and they knew it. That is the beginning of wisdom, isn't it?

Their pagan friends ridiculed their search and did all within their power to keep them on the path of diminishing returns, superficial values, social snobbery, and financial hypocrisy. This couple dug into the Christian faith instead. They worked at their study of the Bible and the meaning of prayer. They practiced their religion and prayed without ceasing. In ten years' time they have evolved from the charming, but defeated, couple I once knew, to become one of the most useful,

dynamic, and important families in American life today. The husband is an active Christian and the wise and benevolent leader of thousands of men who work under him in an enormous and constructive industry.

How strong are you? Are you getting on by your own strength? How long do you think you can last?

When you are strong in the Lord, you are master of every situation in which you find yourself. The odds may seem overwhelming. The enemy may appear to hem you in on every side and the cards may seem to be deliberately stacked against you, but you will remain calm and collected when you are strong in the Lord. Why? Because you are inwardly convinced and outwardly unshaken through belief in the ultimate triumph of God. You cannot lose with God. It is impossible. All you need to do is to be sure, as far as humanly possible, that you are on God's side and that you are trying to do His will. I say trying, because no one is doing His will completely.

What do you do under pressure? There are so many ways of reacting to tense situations—most of them are bad ways of reaction and are destructive. Do you get angry, resentful, and physically com-

bative? Do you become still, tongue-tied, paralyzed, and pallid? Do you apologize, offer excuses? Do you flatter, crawl, or cover up? Do you run away, try to escape by involving others, or do you put the blame on others who are blameless? Do you raise your voice, or become inaudible? Do you make faces and twist handkerchiefs, or do you fidget, tap your foot, or clench your fists? Do you get a pain in the chest, in the stomach, or in the head?

None of these things ought to happen to the Christian who really humbly believes, and sincerely tries to be on the side of God. There is no virtue more helpful than to be calm, cool, and controlled when under pressure. It should be one of the real tests of Christian manhood.

Another clue to the application of St. Paul's words is to be found in the Epistle for Palm Sunday. It reads, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus . . . he humbled himself, and became obedient." There is the clue, namely, to act upon the assumption that God's promises are true and to humble ourselves and become obedient. One of the main reasons that I fail from time to time in my work is due to the fact that my pride tempts me to believe that I must operate my life under the power of my own steam. Then my

steam becomes so low that I haven't even the strength to get a mild toot out of the whistle. Yet pride still prompts me to believe that I must run under my own power. When I humble myself, I become obedient to a command, and here is the command that comes from Christ: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Recognize that I am told to be strong in the Lord and not in myself. I am told to be strong in the power of *His* might and not in *my* might.

Has it ever occurred to you how readily we accept the commands from every imaginable kind of agency other than those of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer?

In ordinary personal activities we accept the commands of our own very weak wills. I decide to get up in the morning, to go to bed at night, to eat or not to eat, to enter or not to enter an elevator, to turn on a radio or not to do so, to shave in the morning or to allow my beard to grow grubby, to say my prayers or to live like a pagan. The point is that upon each of these issues, and thousands more, I make a decision and do something about it. If I come to that terrible point where I can no longer decide what to do about anything, I am ready for the insane asylum. Constant indeci-

sion is a sure sign of approaching mental weakness. However, the great majority of us can decide most issues that come before us each day. Thus, we are men of decision and obedience to the fundamentals of the will.

We obey signs and wonders of the inanimate world. When I leave my home in the morning and drive downtown, I come to certain stop signals. If the green light is on, I go ahead; but if the red light comes up, I obey the signal without hesitation. This is a mere mechanical contraption, but I do what it says for I am obedient to the law, and besides, I do not want to get a police ticket.

I am obedient to human commands also. That same evening when my revelation appeared in the hospital—"be strong in the Lord"—I was visited a few minutes later by an eighteen-year-old student nurse. She entered with a tray upon which were a glass of water and two pills. She offered them to me but I countered with an objection, saying that the doctor did not tell me that I was to have any medication and that I would not take any unless I had more authoritative orders. Yet, look at the situation. I am the titular head of the diocese, and as Bishop I am the leader of my diocesan hospital, in which I was being treated. Here stands a young

eighteen-year-old girl student who is giving me orders, and in answer to my rebellion she says, "All I know, Bishop, is that I have been told to see that you take these pills and I am going to stand here until you do." There was no further argument. I took the pills.

Are you aware of the fact that a great part of your prayer life should be spent on the receiving end of the line between yourself and God? No conversation is complete unless both parties concerned are allowed to do some of the talking. Generally speaking, we feel that prayer is a matter of our own petitions, and we bombard God with endless demands, requests, and objections, and after we have registered our own personal desires we go on about our business ignoring Him altogether. The important thing to realize is that He is forever trying to teach us, to tell us, to make us understand wonderful bits of revelation that will make life more intelligible and understandable.

These subtleties come from texts, the Holy Communion and other services, ideas that pop into your head when you least expect them, reprimands which are sometimes the most valuable revelations, and all manner of human promptings.

Obviously it is not wise to accept every idea that

comes into your head as if it were a revelation emanating from Almighty God. Don't forget that destructive forces are also bombarding you with broadcasts and that it is important for you to weigh the messages, signs, and promptings that may appear. However, the more you pray to God, and the more you seek Him, the more readily will you know when the revelation is a direct message from His own will.

So these revelations will come to you in all kinds of human affairs. If you want the truth, continue constant in the worship of Almighty God in His Church and especially in the Holy Communion. Be faithful in the study of the Bible and in the reading of the Book of Common Prayer. Live a life that is based on kindness and love, yet on truth and fact. The balance of love and reality is the most powerful combination there is, and through it comes the truth. Furthermore, be generous and give of yourself, your time, and your substance. Finally, pray with regularity and remind yourself every day to keep your mind open for the revelations of God. They will come to you over strange wires and through unbelievable situations.

When you and the Lord are united and you are convinced that you are doing His will to the best

of your knowledge, remember the one great word of St. Paul: "Stand." Only when you are surrendered to Him can you think fast, clearly, and fearlessly. Then His voice within you speaks with courage, clarity, and confidence. At such a moment you will be given the words, and they will be the right words. Start to pray for the grace to be calm under pressure, unprejudiced, and full of truth and love. You will get it with patience and persistent prayer. It will add years to your life. It will give you a right judgment in everything. During moments of confusion, it will make you a strong witness to the power of Christ within you.

6

SIN AND FEAR

THE WORST of all sins are *not* the so-called "sins of the flesh." The devil played a trick on the Church by beguiling it into concentrating on "Blue Laws" and similar prohibitions having to do with dancing, smoking, card playing, or over-indulgence. True, they are dangerous. There is no statutory regulation against the most terrible of all sins; yet if it is taken care of first, all lesser sins are attacked at the same time. It is the sin of pride.

By pride I don't refer to the perfectly legitimate thrill coming from a reasonable degree of personal independence. I don't refer to the satisfaction which comes from the power to stand on one's own feet. In other words, I don't refer to a wholesome self-respect, which is a virtue.

In speaking of the sin of pride I refer to the disease that causes a swelling of the ego, an expansion of self-love, an inflammation of the sense of self-importance, and a consequent diminishing of

the sense of duty to God and man. This is the basic sin that Jesus came to destroy, and it has many manifestations.

Intellectually, the sin of pride shows itself in the mood of unteachability—an unwillingness to take criticism however constructive it may be. The attitude that “no one is going to tell me what to do,” or that “my college degree is an evidence of my wisdom,” is simply an evidence of pride. The Bible refers to this as “hardness of heart.”

Emotionally, the sin of pride fills us with anger, revengefulness, and hatred whenever anyone blocks our way or puts blame upon us. Of course such unhealthy emotional states are a deadly poison, capable of producing any disease from ulcers and nervous breakdown to paralysis and outright insanity.

Socially, the sin of pride makes us lust after praise and appreciation; it drives us to “play to the gallery”; it compels us to seek greater and greater adulation in order to nourish our self-esteem. When we become like that, we have to be handled with kid gloves and thus become immune to truth. We become enslaved by our own illusions.

Spiritually, the sin of pride makes us put a fondness for our religious hobbies in the place of dedi-

cation to Christ. We confuse means and methods with ends. Haven't you known clergymen who would rather convert a congregation to a special ritualism or liberalism than to Christ? Haven't you known organists who would prefer the people to love a plainsong chant than to love God? Of course those people are not aware of what they are doing, but into such follies does the sin of pride lead us!

Each occupation and vocation has its own special susceptibility to the sin of pride. I read the other day of a circus performer who was almost burned to death because he thought he was good enough to be careless in his "fire-swallowing" act. But let us think of what this sin does within the Church itself.

The sin of pride is what makes a man neurotic when he finds he can't hold all the reins and have everything go his way. It is this that makes him touchy, always seeking flattery, ever fearing to offend somebody. When this happens to a man, he ought to be put out to pasture, forced to eat grass in a place where he can do no further harm.

The sin of pride is what makes the parish parson half sick when the people don't consider his sermons to be oracles of great import. It is this that brings on a nervous breakdown when he finds he

can't always have his way, and when he discovers that members of the congregation question his words, wisdom, and dictates.

The sin of pride is what turns lay people into Pharisees, making them thankful they are not as other people, and giving them a sense of being an authority in all matters religious. Then, once they are thwarted, or when they get the idea that they are not sufficiently appreciated, they quit their positions on the vestry or in the parish organizations, and when any change is made (without their having been consulted) they go away mad.

Morally, pride is the basic problem of mankind. If we could solve this problem, the tensions of the world would melt away, for it is pride that is the great barrier, the bulwark, against God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven.

But there is another destructive force closely allied with the sin of pride, and that is fear. They are inseparable companions, for one invariably evokes the other.

Most men are afraid of fear. They will admit to almost anything rather than to a lack of courage; they will go to almost any lengths to keep others from knowing they are scared; they will put up fantastic bluffs to create the illusion of their own

bravery. By turns they will give the impression of being strong and silent, loud and dictatorial, stubborn and abusive, profane and tough, hard-drinking and two-fisted—but this is only male showmanship, a false front put up to camouflage the fear that is within.

What are the results of fear?

In the process of hiding his fears from his fellows, a man all too often practices his bravery and bullying tactics on underlings, lesser associates, and members of his own family. When someone stronger or more powerful than he is the oppressor, he fumes inside, hides his feelings, and remains silent. Then when he gets home he explodes and abuses his wife and children.

Fear itself leads to hate and its by-products of jealousy, resentment, anger, revenge, and self-pity. These unwholesome emotional states cause the body's machinery to break down; and since the origin of the trouble is beyond the reach of medication and surgery, hospital treatments give only temporary relief. Before long the same old fear is back again at work, poisoning and destroying the whole organism.

On a national scale, fear prepares the way for industrial strife and war, for fear is contagious,

capable of plunging a whole country into panic and disaster. It is not too much to say that most of our personal and collective troubles originate in our fears.

Man's fear, together with his fear of fear itself, is rooted in his pride. In this he has much in common with the peacock, for he loves to strut and spread himself lest anyone suspect that he might be a timid, scrawny bird underneath. But let a man realize how weak and frail he really is—let him realize that all the human strength and self-confidence in the world are not enough to see him through situations that arrive every day—and in his growing humility his fears will gradually diminish.

This is because to be humble is to recognize that all strength comes not from the self, but from God. Man of himself cannot live for a split second without God's sustaining energy within his body and throughout the universe. Man himself soon comes to the end of his own resources of energy, reason, and instinct; but God has the power to deal with anything. When, therefore, a man realizes that apart from God he is nothing, when he knows that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being," and when he is confident that God can do all things, fear has begun to loosen its grip upon him.

Fear is not only diminished, it is completely destroyed as long as we stay close to God. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear" (I John 4:18). This means that *when we believe enough in God we experience the love that frees us from fear*. All other techniques, such as psychological or psychiatric treatments, do not finally rid us of fear because they do not attack it at the source. They merely try to build up our self-confidence when what we actually need is to be put in contact with the divine Generating Plant of all power, that is, the boundless love of God.

People usually hate and attack because they are afraid. Remove the fear and you dispel the tendency to fight. I saw this principle actually demonstrated with rattlesnakes by a slight woman named Grace Wylie, herpetologist in a Minneapolis museum.

A member of the faculty of the University of Minnesota, Miss Wylie believed that snakes struck only through fear, and that if fear were removed they would become gentle. With unheard-of patience she worked with snakes through long months in order to prove her theory. Finally she was successful.

Hundreds of people have seen her take a ten-foot, diamond-back rattler named Big Ben and handle him with care and affection, opening his mouth

with a spatula and unfolding his two needle-sharp teeth, which are hinged to the roof of his mouth and swing down when activated. In her early experiments she was bitten on several occasions, but each time she analyzed what it was in her behavior that was arousing fear in the snakes and altered her technique accordingly. Evidence of her success in ridding snakes of fear is shown by the fact that she was the first person to have rattlesnakes bear their young in captivity.

If rattlesnakes change when fear is cast out, what a remarkable change we can expect of human beings who have experienced the love of God!

The phrase “perfect love casteth out fear” does not mean that we must be perfect and flawless before we can know the love of God. On the contrary, we are all sinners—weak and stumbling—and God knows our imperfections even better than we do. However, God’s love—not ours—is perfect, capable of accomplishing all things. No matter how sinful we have been, we need only to repent, to desire to do better, and to reach toward that Divine Love. And by doing that, we come to discover the perfect love of God that casts out fear.

7

THE FAITH THAT STRENGTHENS—OR WEAKENS

FAITH can give men and women strength to move mountains; but faith can also leave people weak, disillusioned, and incapable of doing anything. It all depends on what they have faith *in*. If their faith is rooted in God as revealed in Christ, then they can indeed move mountains; but if their faith is rooted in something less than God, they are just asking for trouble. Our Lord Himself suggested this in His famous parable of the foundations: when the storm came, the house built on a rock stood erect, while the house whose foundations were on sand collapsed.

People are sometimes surprised at me because I discourage them in what they consider “ventures of faith.” They feel a parson, of all people, should have faith without limit. Of course, a priest, or anyone else for that matter, should have boundless

faith in God. But no one can afford to be misled by attitudes which masquerade as such faith—shallow optimism, for instance, or confidence in things that pass away—for their consequence is inevitable disillusionment.

There are many things that people use as substitutes for faith in God—and the results of such misplaced faith are uniformly disastrous. Some put their faith in human nature, and then they are surprised when this human nature reveals itself to be weak, self-centered, vindictive, and ungrateful. “After all I’ve done for So-and-so, and now he does this to me!” is a phrase that expresses this disillusionment in human frailty. Actually, of course, man is a risky “critter”; you never know when he’s going to throw you over the fence. And the Bible points out that man is only trustworthy once he has been born again by the Spirit, and only so long as he remains dedicated to God. Faith in unredeemed, unregenerated human nature is perilous. This is the weakness of modern “Humanism.”

Some think that faith involves a rash optimism concerning finances, and thus they set out to buy a house, an automobile, a television set, and expensive clothing—all on a shoestring. Such people

often have been misled by a "think right" book which has beguiled them into believing that if one has constructive thoughts, all his wants will be fulfilled. Granted, our Lord cautioned us against being anxious about the future; but at the same time He urged His disciples to live simply, and for Himself had no place to lay His head. Obviously, to let one's faith be rooted in mere optimism about forthcoming prosperity is precarious.

Then there are those whose faith takes the form of a sentimental national patriotism. Some speak of their "faith in the future of America," and then they use this attitude as a cloak behind which to hide from their personal responsibilities to the nation. Others, even more naive, take refuge in a shallow global patriotism. "If only we have faith in Russia," they say, "there will be no war." Such remarks, of course, are nothing but wishful thinking; they distort the whole idea of faith. Only when the nations of the earth have been redeemed—brought into obedience to the laws of God—will faith in them begin to be justified. Until then, such faith is nothing but a form of blindness.

To endure and to have a permanently strengthening effect upon life, faith must be rooted in God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Our Lord is the su-

preme Realist, and never for a moment did He suggest that faith should be placed in human nature, or in hopes of future prosperity, or in the governments of nations. He taught that our faith should rest upon a Rock, the eternal God.

Such faith, we must never forget, is not something we acquire merely by willing it. We do not receive faith simply by saying, "From now on I'm going to have it." On the contrary, the success or failure of your faith depends upon one word: contact. It is like ringing a doorbell. Only one thing is required—that the bell button be sufficiently touched to cause two pieces of wire or metal to contact one another. When contact is made, the bell rings. We can admire the bell, listen for the bell, paint the bell, polish the bell, but until someone touches it properly, nothing happens. Let me tell you of a remarkable contact that was made with Christ and what happened.

A prominent man named Jairus had a young daughter who was expected to die. He had tried everything and finally decided to ask Jesus to help. The man was so desperate that he humbled himself before our Lord. He placed his full trust in Him. Christ was impressed and agreed to cure her.

See them as they walk through the narrow city streets packed with Oriental merchants, shoppers, camels, donkeys, children, and dogs as they try to make their way to the child's bedside. It is all the more difficult because the Master and His followers are recognized. Everybody wants a close look at Him. The procession comes almost to a standstill as Jairus nearly bursts with frustrated but contained impatience.

At this moment, an unseen drama is being enacted. A poor woman with hideous hemorrhages is making her way through the throng in an effort to contact Jesus. She has been suffering from the disease for ten years and has spent her entire savings on physicians and has steadily regressed. According to the Mosaic law, she is unclean and has no right to be out in public. But of one thing she is sure—that contact with Christ will heal her. Near death, bent over and covered, she crawls with almost superhuman determination through the legs of the crowd. Reaching out, she grasps the hem of Jesus' robe and instantly she is cured.

Our Lord whirls around with wide-eyed surprise and crisply inquires, "Who touched me? Which of you? I must know." Peter comes up with a quick and sensible answer, "Why, Master, look at the

crowd, all kinds of people have touched you. They are touching you right now." Christ replies something like this, "These people are touching me with curiosity. But someone touched me with faith. There is a vast difference. I could tell in an instant because power, virtue, flowed directly from me to whoever that person was who touched me."

The woman wants to cause no trouble. She wants no notice. She would shun any possible publicity. She is trying to leave, unnoticed. But the Master's question is a command. She turns back to Him, falling at His feet, admitting that it was she who had made the contact. He leans down, tenderly and gently helps her to her feet, saying, "O woman, great is your faith. Do you realize that it was your own faith that cured you? It was your inner and unwavering conviction that drew the power from me into yourself. Go in peace. You are healed."

Faith is a gift from God. We must seek it, pray for its growth, and exercise it. But always realize that it is a quality of spiritual power given by God and not a thing or a specific kind of information. Faith is a power added to the mind as a telescope is added to the eye. It enables you to

see truths which cannot be understood with the human reason or brain. It is a power that gives insight into the spiritual reality of a supernatural order. Thus, with the aid of faith, a simple peasant can see truths that a brilliant professor cannot see without faith.

It is important that you desire faith, but of yourself you cannot create faith. You already have its rudiments. As St. Paul says, "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." (Romans 12:3). In 1 Timothy 4:14, you are told, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee," and in 2 Timothy 1:6, you are told to "stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." In other words, to those who have sought the gift of faith, it has been given.

How are you to stir up and develop the gift of faith? By four general processes. First, by seeing the necessity of faith and by using your own will to want or desire faith. Secondly, by praying for the gift to grow and develop within you. Thirdly, by seeking special help, by going to the Holy Communion and receiving God's grace as often as you can. And, fourthly, by exercising or acting upon the faith that you already have.

Recently I was in Texas and met a geologist, a

young man in his late twenties. He told me this experience. He leased some Texas properties and was drilling for oil. He is a devout Christian, the old-fashioned kind who carries a New Testament in the hip pocket of his blue jeans, the kind who reads it faithfully and prays over his work. He drilled for oil at a particular place until he was almost out of money. He notified his crew that all work would stop and he would pray and read the Bible until he was guided more directly about their future. After a few days, he was convinced that he should go back to the same spot and drill some more. This he did and uncovered one of the most lucrative gushers in that part of the state. Now, if the story ended here you would say that this is merely an act of faith for personal gain, but let's go on.

As soon as things were under control, he called his crew together and held a prayer meeting to offer thanks. Next, he called his lawyer and signed over the well for the sole benefit of Christian foreign missions. That was a sacrificial act of faith, for he still had very little money to go on. He went on in trust to seek more oil with which to pay his crew and support his faith.

When the faith in you touches Christ, things

begin to happen. Why not start to trust our Lord in little things by starting to make some sacrificial act of spiritual adventure? It won't be long before an opportunity will arise. Grasp it and trust God. First pray about it; ask God about it. Do not act on mere emotional impulse. If you have qualms, pray it out with your minister or a wise Christian friend; but start to seek the increase of the gift of faith that is in you. Touch Christ with faith and see what happens.

8

IMAGINATION, VISION,
AND FAITH

*He taught them many things by parables. . . .
Hearken; Behold. . . . But without a parable
spake he not unto them.*—MARK 4:2, 3, AND 34.

OUR LORD told stories that were so vivid they became living pictures, not easily erased from the imagination of His listeners. Those who brooded over them were fired with new visions, possibilities, and hopes. Their feelings and emotions were set on fire. Our Lord knew that once He firmly gripped their imaginations to the depths of their subconscious roots, He had them forever. True, they might temporarily be ridiculed sufficiently to be talked out of following Him, but the visions He gave them would always come back to draw them again to His side.

So, He said unto them, "Hearken, behold." He told them to look, see, visualize, imagine, and picture the story. Make it real, live it. Sense it,

feel it, hear it, touch it—the way the Jesuits do in the Spiritual Exercises of their founder, Ignatius Loyola. He knew that once they understood Him by faith, He could trust them to approach Him with reason. Had they come to Him on a rationalistic basis first, love would have degenerated into a mere analytical critique. He knew that in religion a man must first seek the gift of faith, and once he has it, he can be trusted to use such intellectual powers as he might possess. Religion that operates the other way around often becomes sterile and prideful. Love and understanding are not to be approached with calculus and a slide rule.

Jesus said, "I, if I be lifted up . . . will draw all men unto me." He must be lifted up for men to see, to know, to understand, to befriend, and to love. He must become real, vital, and alive. Also He must be close and intimate so that one feels His accessibility at all times. We should be on such friendly terms with Him that we are never afraid to talk with Him about anything, for His "property is always to have mercy."

We need to make Him such a living Friend that we will do anything for Him, knowing that He will give us the power to do anything. We must not approach Him with a critical set of rationaliza-

tions concerning His life as depicted in the Gospels. That is no way to make a friend. Read the New Testament for what it says and “think on these things” until He is so alive that He stands beside you. When you know Him so well that you can speak to Him on any subject at any time, you can be intimate enough to question Him concerning His Gospels—not before.

Religion must appeal to the creative faculties if it is to be effective. One ought first to be steeped in the great stories of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. The mighty acts of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Elijah, Elisha, the Prophets, our Lord, St. Paul, and the Apostles should be living experiences of moving vitality, imagination, and spiritual power from the outset. This does not mean a return to blind fundamentalism and textual literalism. It does mean that the spirit of the supernatural and miraculous needs first to be so deeply imbedded in the heart of a Christian that he trusts God to preserve him when he is right and to accomplish any wonder that is for the good of man. Most of us modern clergy know little about the English Bible. We are trained mostly in the critical aspects of the origin of the books. We come to the people as trained Biblical critics rather than fiery spiritual leaders

steeped in the fabulous mysteries and powers of God.

"Hearken; behold." He did not say, "Listen, I want you to reason and think about God." He said, "Attention, look at this picture I am going to paint for you."

The Bible is filled with creative imagination, supernatural events, fantastic stories, and an unceasing appeal to one's faith in the all-powerful Almighty of God. This book is the rock upon which we build and prove our faith. It should inspire and propel the Church of our time into ever new and imaginative expansion. Yet there is little Bible preaching today that lifts people to new heights and visions. Far too many sermons take little account of the wondrous events of the Bible. If they do, too often they explain them away, so that the "intelligent" will not be offended. We forget that just about everyone needs to believe that great things can be done by God through us. People welcome the Bible stories that lift them outside their limited materialistic thought patterns.

The same problem has occurred in the field of science where orthodox learning has tended to inhibit creativity. A brilliant professor at M.I.T. has developed a remedy with startling success and

daring imagination. Professor John E. Arnold has created a new planet, Arcturus IV, about 192 trillion miles away. He gives it strange endowments of atmosphere and many odd physical features, vastly different from anything we know. It is inhabited by an intelligent race of two-legged creatures descended from birdlike ancestors. He uses this stage-set to pose problems in the design of all kinds of new and necessary equipment. Thus, his students are forcibly unshackled from the bonds of habit and tradition. His desire is to liberate their minds from mental blocks. C. F. Kettering once defined an inventor as "a fellow who doesn't take his education too seriously."

Even though the Bible is filled with creative scenes and experiences, it is often considered crude or queer to advocate praying with an unlimited faith. The first thing that is said by almost any orthodox Protestant is, "But don't you think it is dangerous? You might become a fanatic." In reality, there is little if any danger of modern Christians becoming fanatics. There is far more chance that they will become neurotics. We are so spiritually uncreative and unimaginative and lacking in faith that we become earthbound by materialistic worries, fears, anxieties, and psycho-

somatic illnesses. A little creative faith would lift us above the gravitational pull of the earthly materialism we espouse, and carry us to new vistas of great spiritual achievement.

9

THE SECRET OF BEING RIGHT

THE final victory always goes to the man who is right; to be right is ultimately to triumph. Bear this in mind; paste it in your hat; read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it: when you are right you are formidable, unassailable, and indestructible. All other powers fade away and disintegrate before a man who stands in the right. That is why the job of a Christian is to seek "a right judgment in all things."

What steps must we take to be right?

We get a wonderful insight into the secret of being right in Matthew 14:13-33. This is the passage that begins with Christ's feeding of the multitude with five loaves and two fishes and ends with the seemingly fabulous story of His walking on the water. To read these ten verses is to discover first of all that to be right is often to be misunderstood by others.

When our Lord fed the multitude, His aim was to

establish an unbreakable fellowship. His purpose was to bind the members of the crowd to one another by spiritual communion and thus to inaugurate a reign of brotherhood and peace.

The people, however, put a different interpretation on the miracle. They marvelled at our Lord's materialistic power and yearned to have it used for a revolutionary war. In a state of near frenzy they came to believe Jesus was the Messiah who would lead them to overcome their Roman oppressors. They had visions of Herod murdered and of Christ occupying his throne.

This was not at all what Jesus had envisioned. He knew that a change in government would make little difference if the people's hearts were the same blind instruments of selfish hate they had always been. Though the multitude had eaten, it had remained unfed; the people had misunderstood His motives.

Anxious for guidance by which to direct His steps, Jesus dismissed the crowd, sent the disciples across the lake in a boat, and then sought to be alone with God. He walked through the mountains, praying, talking, and thinking with His Father. He saw one great duty to the confused populace: to be right. If His reason and emotions were in

alignment with the basic principles of God, He might at first be misunderstood; but the ultimate failure of His mission was impossible. Jesus knew that rightness could lead to a cross; He knew also that a cross endured for God's sake was an instrument of victory.

To be right, a man must learn to talk with God, to place his problems, wants, and desires, no matter how base, on the table before Him. He must freely admit his feelings and prejudices, and pour them out to God, as he would to a psychiatrist. He must say what he feels, and then ask God to speak back through his highest self. Every man has a conscience, but he usually exercises it on behalf of other people. He trains himself to anesthetize his conscience by the aid of his ego and to waken it only when the other fellow displeases his prejudices. It is a good plan to try literally locking the door of your closet, with yourself on the inside, and talking out loud with God. When you come out you will be nearer right than when you went in.

It is easy to confuse rightness with self-righteousness, and to do this is disastrous. No one is so dangerous as he who serves the evils of his own egotism while thinking he is pleasing to God. Such a man becomes spiritually blind, morally self-

satisfied, and stupidly cruel in all his relationships; he becomes a menace to society in the name of religion, a warmonger masquerading as a peace-maker. While he piously believes he is the keeper of the great seal of Christian virtue, he is actually the enemy of Christ. He is the perpetual first stone-caster. "Woe to such," said Jesus, and He went on to condemn self-righteousness more than any other sin.

To be right, a person must first seek the grace to be humble—to accept the whole truth about himself and to be willing to face all the facts about any given situation. Oftentimes the most unpleasant (yet most necessary) truths come from our bitterest enemies. Are we willing to place objective truth above subjective prejudice? We must seek the grace to be glad when we have made the discovery that we are wrong. Humility also means that we will fear God only, that we will not grovel, appease, or placate any man.

To see the truth is one thing, to perform it is another; thus it is necessary to pray for the grace to trust God and to be daring. There are times when you will be called upon to be a spiritual surgeon, to operate immediately and to cut deeply into the infected area, even though it may hurt

you and the patient to do so. Better to die for the right and be assured of a resurrection than to live with what is wrong and be smothered by a deadening blanket of exaggerated egotism from which no resurrection can occur.

So, aware that the people had misunderstood Him, Jesus talked with God for most of the night. And out of this communion came a deeper understanding and a renewed courage. He saw that peace and brotherhood would have to come, not from changed outward situations but from changed human hearts. And realizing this, He could never compromise a spiritual principle for the cheap adulation of the multitude. He was ready to go to Calvary, knowing that even though His followers deserted Him, the right He stood for would eventually triumph.

Along with understanding and courage, there came to Jesus a new power—represented for us by His walking on the water. Coming down the mountain to the shore of the Sea of Galilee, He saw the disciples' boat out in the middle of the lake. The vessel was shipping water over the gunwales; she was pitching and tossing like a toy sailboat, and the disciples themselves were over-

come with fear. So Jesus went out to them, walking on the water.

On their part the disciples did not know what to make of it. Was it a ghost? A spirit? Could it be Christ Himself? Their terrors multiplied; but brash, impulsive Peter challenged the figure on the water: "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee." Jesus bade him come, and Peter stepped into the raging sea, only to take a few steps and then to sink. It remained for Jesus to reprove him for his want of faith and to pull him out of the deep.

The meaning of this episode is clear: When you give God the opportunity, He will set you right. When you are right—humbly right, truthfully right, rejoicing in the discovery of your mistakes—you are the most formidable force on earth. You can walk above anything; you are a conqueror. Don't let anyone tell you Jesus couldn't walk on the waters. As a matter of fact you can do things as great, when thanks to the grace of God you are in the right.

10

FORMULA FOR THE FUTURE

THERE is a formula for frustration and disaster; it is a way of life that inevitably invites evil and sorrow. But there is also a formula for achievement and victory; this is a way of life that invites blessings and opportunities. Each man's future is largely determined by this formula, the way of life, that he adopts in the present. Most of us are quick to recognize our misfortunes—social, economic, family, physical, personal—though we are seldom aware that we have brought most of them upon ourselves by following a negative, harmful formula. On the other hand, if the Christian fundamentals operate within us, we live constructively and we reduce the number of our misfortunes. What is more, we have the power to stand up to the troubles which remain.

What are the fundamentals of our religion? What are the ingredients in the Christian formula for successful living? They are known as the

“Theological Virtues” of Faith, Hope, and Love.

The greatest element in the Christian formula is *love*. Basically, love is expressed in humility toward God and compassion toward mankind, but these attitudes have many ramifications. They include surrender to the will of God; willingness to face the truth about oneself; the rooting out of self-pity and selfishness; open warfare against all hate, resentment, vindictiveness, and jealousy; and fearlessness and good will toward all people.

Granted, no one on earth can fully express such an attitude of love; but if we adopt it as our foremost standard, God will be well pleased. We may slip and fall, but if our desire to be loving remains dominant, God will never cease to forgive us and to grant us the power to start anew.

Jesus repeatedly said that no great spiritual acts could be accomplished without *faith*. Faith means to believe. “Only believe,” and “Thy faith hath made thee whole,” are some of the statements Jesus made constantly. There are no limits to what can be done if faith is present.

Some person may protest that he can live without faith; yet most of his activities are done on faith. He buys food, takes medicine, accepts checks, travels in airplanes, crosses bridges, rides in ele-

vators, sails oceans, starts a business, gets married, has children, undergoes operations—all without proof or assurance of successful completion. He lives by faith, whether he likes it or not. He may say that he acts on the basis of the experience of other people—others, for instance, have successfully done all the things he undertakes. But this same reasoning can be applied to Christianity, for millions have been able to live victoriously and to accomplish miracles because of their faith that the love of God would never fail.

A vital faith cannot remain static; it must become transformed into *hope*. Hope is activated faith in the form of expectancy. It is faith in action. Faith makes us agree with St. Paul that “all things work together for good to them that love God,” but hope makes us live in the knowledge of that truth. Hope means living in the confidence that there is a Divine Process of Unfoldment working out a plan for the good of everyone who loves God and believes in Him. It means having the assurance that God has plans for us better than anything we can “either desire or deserve.”

When I look back upon my own life, I can see that God has led me through a fantastic series of surprises that have come in spite of what some-

times seemed to be hopeless situations. I know now they only appeared "hopeless" because I did not see with the eyes of faith.

The ingredients of faith, hope, and love are not poured into an individual all at once. No one can make the formula work simply by saying to himself, "From now on I'm going to possess the virtues of faith, hope, and love." These elements are produced in the "laboratory" of regular, faithful worship.

Worship is devotion to God expressed in praise and thanksgiving. The more we praise and thank God, the more He is able to "bless and keep us." This is because our recognition of His gifts makes us worthy of having them and prepares the way for us to receive more of them. To worship, therefore, is to recognize the good that has already come our way and to thank God for the greater good that is on its way. And by such a worshipful attitude we grow in faith, hope, and love.

However much we may make this formula our own, Christianity is not a guarantee for the elimination of problems and troubles. All of us have burdens to bear at times; none of us escapes being confronted by death, disappointment, and tragedy. Sometimes we may even be called upon to carry

a cross for someone else. But we can "be glad and rejoice," for in Christianity is the power to go through pain and hardship to victory.

Our Lord said, "Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." By constantly bringing ourselves into contact with Him through prayer every day of our lives, we avail ourselves not only of His refreshing strength, but gain in the power to grow in spirit day by day, year by year, so that no circumstance can ever find us wanting.

11

AT ONE WITH THE FATHER

JESUS was threatened with stoning for offering man the secret formula that creates the most inevitable and victorious force in the world. No words can be strong enough to back this formula as a dogma that stands above all dogmas. He is the only and final answer to all problems of peace, economic security, freedom, and successful democracy. Any lesser formula is bound to fail, producing only cynicism and cruel dictatorship.

To be stoned for a statement means that you are dealing in important ideas. Christianity is not a soothing syrup which makes outward lambs out of inward ravening wolves. When practiced, it is a fire that burns away the false and the trivial and exposes the real and the true. So when Jesus Christ made the statement that almost caused stones to be flung at His head, He was bringing sin out into the open where all vital Christianity will eventually

force the enemy, who, as a rule, prefers a dirty undercover fight.

Jesus warned us to beware when all men speak well of us, for then we are not in the battle, we are show-offs who participate only for the applause of the grandstand. One of the most sure-fire ways for a person to gauge his effectiveness is by the frequency of bitter anonymous letters. When no fire is drawn in his direction, he had better examine his conscience. Yet, at the same time, those who delight in drawing fire had better also examine their consciences lest they merely antagonize for the sake of their own ego rather than for the love of Christ.

"I and my Father are one." That is all Jesus said, and it nearly brought a storm of rocks about Him. His enemies thought that He was blasphemous; by throwing rocks they believed they would be doing God a service; they reacted according to the best they knew, but that best was a very low level of understanding. Jesus always looked at these attacks impersonally, with sadness for the people involved; for think, just think, what this statement could have done for them. They had admired His miracles; they wanted to imitate them but feared His mysterious personal power that reached out

and touched a force about which they knew nothing. In fear, they knew not what they were doing or why.

He usually took men where they were in religion. Instead of beginning with sacrifices and crosses He introduced them to His Father with feedings and healings. They wanted His great secret, but when He stated it, they wanted to kill Him. What strange creatures we be. Perverse, that's the word for it. Perverse because He even told these people that they could do greater things than He did. Read again the mistake of these sad people in the 10th chapter of St. John's Gospel and try to profit by their blunder. Here in Christ's words is just what we are looking for.

This powerful clue to the mystery of successful living leads us directly to the question of God's all-powerful will. Immediately, you may say that the will of God is a myth. Why doesn't He stop the horrors of war, plague, murder, and poverty? How can anyone conceive of a God with a powerful will when innocent men, women, and children by the millions have been subject to such unheard-of sufferings as were inflicted by the Nazis and the Japs in World War II and by the Communists in Korea? Where is this all-powerful will

of God that permits this to happen? If He is all-powerful, He could stop it; and if He deliberately permits it, He isn't a God of love and isn't worthy of worship—He is a God worthy of the curses and blasphemies of the righteous.

When I was a choir boy, I used to go every Fall to the annual Parish Bazaar. The feature attraction for the boys was the Punch and Judy show. A stage was rigged up about the size of a railroad ticket window, and the characters were dolls fitted over the hands of the operators who were concealed below the window. The operators mimicked the voices of the characters, and the illusion was amazing. Punch did away with everyone until finally the devil got him and carried him off to hell. When the Bazaar was over, the cast was carefully put away in boxes and stored in the parish hall closet under careful lock so that the young choristers could not get their hands on them. In the show the cast was made up of dummies who could never speak their own minds, make their own decisions, or express their own desires. Who wants to be a dummy? Do you? Can you imagine living in a dummy world that would cause you to be no more than a painted doll of wood and calico?

The minute we really expect God to use His all-powerful will to stop a war we must necessarily become dummy dolls who are manipulated by someone other than ourselves. God cast us as free men with minds and wills and brains. He could have forced us to be good and not to make war, but He saw no value in making dummies so He made us somewhat like Himself, free. To help us, when we had fallen into great trouble, He sent His Son to show us how to live according to His will. Even more, Jesus also left us with powerful energies to strengthen us in our daily life. Still more remarkable, He provided a means whereby we might make up for our mistakes even though our troubles seem insurmountable. In theological terms, these provisions are called Grace and Forgiveness. No man can live without both. If you are having trouble, that is probably the cause—a lack of these two necessities.

You see, God placed a limit upon His own power. He made us and wants our love more than anything else in the world, but forced love is no good. It ceases to be love. What man ever successfully wooed a girl by forcing her to say she loved him by twisting her arm until she cried, "Yes," in excruciating pain! That is not love. God made

us and then put the whole matter of living and loving in our own hands. If we choose to make war, He is bitterly sad, but He will never force a peace by casting us as dummies. Instead He offers the world the only peace terms that can save: grace and forgiveness.

When you are made one with the Father, something happens. I don't know exactly what it is except that the combination is one that is unbeatable in any joint project, no matter how impossible it may appear to be to the worldly eye. When the human personality converges with the Divine, in perfect agreement, the energy of the contact is ready to burst any given project into a spiritual flame unquenchable.

When I was rector of a parish, I used to make calls almost every afternoon. I didn't relish this doorbell-pushing ministry until I actually got started—then it might turn into a fascinating adventure. Sometimes, I must confess, I would just as soon the parishioner wouldn't be home—then I could stick my card in the box and get credit anyway. Not an attitude to be proud of for a minister of the Gospel, but on the good days I wished they would all be at home. I would walk up to the front porch and ring the bell with the slight press of a finger. I'd

wait, walk about, and ring again. This time I used my whole arm to press the tiny bell. I'd walk about some more and finally give it a severe ring by gritting my teeth and leaning my whole weight against the little black button, pressing with all my strength. All that was necessary was to press the button gently to make a contact between two pieces of metal to make the bell ring. No matter how hard I pushed it, it would not ring with any greater volume of sound than if I merely pressed it gently.

A simple contact is all that is necessary. Nor can you force the union with God by gritting your teeth in prayer or by ritual or by intellectual attainments. The contact that rings the spiritual bell is made simply, humbly, and directly. When the bell rings, things begin to happen.

II

PRAYER

12

PRAYER AND PRESSURE

WHY should anyone pray or seek communion with God? The most high-minded answer is that we should try to know and love God simply because He is God and we are His creatures. Most treatises on prayer state that we should seek God for His own sake and not for purely personal reasons. That is correct. But—

When a diver goes under water, he is supplied with air from above. The deeper he goes the stronger the pressure of the tons of water all about him. To prevent his being jammed like jelly into his steel helmet, he is given an equalizing pressure through a hose so that the pressure within him and his suit can withstand the pressure from without. Most of us pray spasmodically, if at all. Then all of a sudden we get down so deep in worldly complications that the pressure is more than we can take.

We cry violently on the telegraphic line of prayer and demand immediate pressure from above to withstand the converging weight of outer prob-

lems. The point is that we have to keep the spiritual pressure up daily as we move down into worldly complications. If we rely on our own strength, and suddenly seek to have enormous gusts of spiritual energy blown into us, it would be more than we could stand. Inner spiritual pressure must be built as we go, day by day.

As a rule we do not love and want God for His own sake. We usually want God because we are up against pressure from the outer world, pressure that has broken through our meager armor of thin self-made childish human philosophy and attacked our inner selves. Therefore, most of us pray because we get into trouble. Our Lord knew that such would be the case. He spoke often of the Holy Ghost whom He would send after He left the earth. He referred to the Spirit who would abide with us as the Comforter. He knew men. He was not disillusioned, for His knowledge of human beings told him that they would turn to God when they needed a Comforter.

Most of us need repeated trouble to prove to our inflated egos that helplessness is our normal state. This is a loathsome point of view as seen by human pride. We like to be men of might, rugged individualists, captains of our fate, and proudly

self-reliant. Yet, add the presence of God to these personal power impulses, drive out self, and we really do become somebody, yet, nobody. "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." We become people of power in this way: we learn to stand with God, independent of the world; in His service we cease to be manpleasers; His service becomes perfect freedom; we become aware that without Him we create our own unhappy fate.

As a rule, during a lifetime, we run into serious difficulties: financial loss, paralyzing inferiority, fleshly sin, the fear of being caught; dishonesty and its consequences, selfishness and the loss of friends; opposition and accusation by vicious persons; sickness and the fear of death. Any one of these, or some other dread experience, thunders toward us, and we are suddenly faced with an overwhelming helplessness. Then we may turn to God and the Church, but, when the crisis passes, we cool off and again inflate our egos with the air of self-sufficiency. As a rule this process must be repeated frequently to make us finally see that either God will be permitted to run us or we will crack up.

Thousands upon thousands of people constantly find themselves at the crack-up point, but they do not know where to turn when they want real re-

ligious help. They have lost faith in religion. It is sad, but true, that too few of us clergymen are ourselves spiritually mature enough or have enough spiritual technique to offer a concrete program for the needs of the seeker. Christ's Church has all the answers but we are poor witnesses. On the other hand, some people are so beaten down that they can scarcely live through the day; yet they will not turn to God because they fear the surrender of their precious self-love and private will. Thus, many seek escape in the opiates of alcoholism, sleeping pills, and superficial amusement. Sadly enough, too many medical men the country over prescribe the easy way out by regularly suggesting sedatives, saying they are harmless. Any habit of escape from reality is harmful unless it is purely a temporary relief from physical pain. There is no escape from sickness of the mind and soul but to try to "offer ourselves, our souls and bodies" to God who will then send us the "comfort and consolation of His Holy Spirit."

The fundamental forces that drove primitive man to seek help from God were such events as famine, drought, storms, enemies, wild beasts, disease, accusations, and persecution. We are motivated to ask for spiritual help today by the same

urges based on fear, only the scenery has been changed. We still grope for God when our emotions dominate us and we are torn mentally and physically by their powerfully destructive forces. States of fear, anxiety, worry, wrath, hatred, sorrow, and remorse can have such devastating power over a person that finally he is driven to his knees. When some psychologists began to write about the fear motivations in prayer, they and their clients too often thought they had made a great discovery which clearly debunked religion. They forgot that this whole point of view was previously explained in the Bible. The ancient writers knew that the fear motive was basic, for they knew that God had so arranged things. The answer was clearly, simply, and directly stated in the First Epistle of John: "Perfect love casteth out fear."

The common experience of practically all primitive peoples the world over has been in keeping with the fear-Godward reaction. However, it is not a matter of a God-consciousness being created by fear but, rather, fear is a by-product of man's sense of God's Almightyness. God placed a spark of His own Spirit within the soul of every human being ever created, as a light which "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." God first made

man with the predisposed consciousness to seek Him for a sense of security and completion. God first made and sought us, He then allows us free will. We find through fear that we cannot be happy without Him, and finally He aids us on our journey back to strength in Him. No wonder that St. Paul could quite honestly, with fervent feeling, thank God for the thorn in his flesh, for the persecutions which he constantly suffered, for he was well assured that without them he would have wandered off under his own weak power and have come to no good end.

13

WHAT IT TAKES

WHAT are some of the conditions under which a man is most likely to learn how to pray? I used to believe that they consisted of certain necessities: a beautiful library of leather-bound mystical classics encased in a pine-panelled study; a magnificently hand-carved *prie-dieu* which faced a sterling silver crucifix hanging upon a background of blue and gold brocade exactly in line with the level of the eye. Then again, I believed that with a continuously accessible Gothic chapel, whose lancet windows were of the best medieval design, predominant in deep blues and reds, I could find the atmosphere that would enable me to touch the powerful mysteries. Still better, if that chapel had a liturgical altar, full rich seasonal frontals, and six tall office lights of silver; and finally, if it had the flickering red light to honor the Sacrament—then, ah then, how I could pray!

These things I love, but they certainly are not the great driving forces that have led me to what

little I know about prayer. Not even the wonderful books that I have read, by the most pious monks and mystics, have caused me daily to seek the only source of lasting strength, peace, and power. What then would I say was the most helpful adjunct to the deep communion and fellowship that is the greatest experience in the Christian life?

The conditions that have most aided me in the development of a prayer life are hardly due to architectural appointments, mystical masterpieces, or aesthetic satisfactions. My education in prayer, so far, has sprung from inferiorities, fears, failures, frustrations, and secret sins. They have dogged my rationalizations, evasions, defiances, and deliberate self-deceptions until, spiritually breathless, I came before the throne of grace and asked for help.

Other conditions to which I owe much have been made possible by individuals, committees, and boards, who have opposed my willful desires. I have often thought that my ideas were God's ideas, but more often they were my own impulsive whims. There have been those individuals whom I opposed and conquered—many such—but the most helpful are those with whom I fought and by whom I was forced to forfeit my will and whom I often bitterly resented as well as feared.

Then there have been vestries which openly attacked my weaknesses in public meeting to such a degree that I was often ill before and after the sessions. These belonged to the days when seldom did I ever face my shortcomings and failures, but projected them on the world, on people, and on bad luck. When nothing else seemed to work, I left off the prayer of polite routine and began the petitions of conviction which seem only to spring from a sense of personal inadequacy and painful guilt.

Humility is not one of those virtues most of us come by naturally. Rather it seems that we need to acquire it by being knocked about time and time again in the course of our lives until we have learned how weak we really are. Humility is the precondition for spiritual growth and ultimate strength. We need first to feel our inadequacy, and *then* we can learn to be strong in the Lord. Most of those occurrences in our lives that have forced us painfully to our knees are, in the long run, not simply the disasters they seemed at the time, but rather they are actually the potential source of growth in Christian strength.

The making of Christian character is like the construction of a great building (to use an archi-

tectural analogy for the moment). First, all the loose earth and clay must be cut away, and then only, when the firm bedrock lies exposed, can the foundations for the building be laid and the construction begun. So it is that those events in our lives that slough off the superficial loose sands of false pride and self-righteousness will ultimately enable us to build lasting qualities of character upon firm foundations. At this point the eternal values of prayer enter into the picture.

The most effective way to build strong and powerful qualities of character in our lives is through constant daily prayer. "In every thing by prayer and supplication" is the way St. Paul advises that we face the uncertainties of the day. Too many Christians, on the other hand, face everything in "fear and trembling," unable to bring themselves to the discipline of being "constant in prayer."

We are hearing much about the need of being "Prayer Book Churchmen" these days, but in too many instances the pious mouthing of the phrase refers to some kind of mechanistic rubricism that stresses the letter of the law in opposition to the spirit. A "Prayer Book Churchman" means that a person will first be given to prayer in all things.

He will consult God in private about problems, events, persons, and places that concern him. He will meditate over the inner meaning of the Collects, Epistles, and Gospels, as well as try to be loyal to rules and regulations. The constant danger is Phariseeism. It is easier to keep the letter of the law than to observe the spirit, and that is why our Lord so carefully calls our attention to the terrible sins of legalism. They always lead to self-righteousness.

If we carry the spirit of Christ into the obligations of daily living, we will cease to be worriers, fretters, criticizers, and unpleasant legalizers. We will take everything to the Lord in prayer. That means that we will do the following:

1. The moment our minds begin to churn with worry, criticism, and legalistic self-righteousness in any human or institutional relationship, we will stop and do the practical thing. Pray. Otherwise, we will begin to spin in the rhythm of destructive forces that will fill our minds with lies and poison our actions. So wherever you are, whatever you are doing, stop and pray the moment you find yourself agitated about anything.

2. Ask for an understanding of His Spirit. Ask Him how He would look at the problem through

the eyes of His love, truth, humility, and courage. Perhaps that is all the time you will have to spend on prayer when evil creeps in during the midst of some activity. It is all the prayer you need if you mean it. Quick as a flash, He will go to work for you.

3. Take time out every day before starting your routine and ask for the truth of Christ's fact-finding Light, that it may shine on all you do. It will turn the negative imagination of worry into the reality of things as they are, and seldom will they be as bad as you surmise. Truth will transform self-righteous legalism into humility and will destroy your frustrated resentments. You will be amazed how it will improve your health.

If you really want to overcome the devil of worry and his attendant slaves who bring hell to earth, you must ask yourself two questions: First, do I want to let our Lord in on everything I do? Second, am I willing to live in the bright comfort of His light? Christianity is practical and it works. Do you really want it or would you rather churn along in agony and grow old and bitter and useless? Christianity is a religion of decision and constant conversion. What about it?

14

BE SURE TO PRAY FOR YOURSELF

I WILL lift up mine eyes unto the hills; from whence cometh my help? My help cometh even from the Lord."

I feel sorry for anyone who does not consistently seek help from the Lord. The person who does not pray for himself is missing contact with the source of all power. If he is trying to live life on his own strength, he will sooner or later be empty of all his energy. He will face a crisis greater than any he has ever known.

A brilliant young doctor came to see me not long ago because he was in trouble. He had an academic attitude toward God, and a set of emotional complications that were driving him to suicide. The story of why he thought of taking his own life is unimportant. The point is that he felt that he had no right to pray for himself. He regarded it as selfish. He could worship God in church. He could pray for others. He could

read heavy books on theology. He could sit for hours in religious bull sessions, but it made him feel guilty to pray for himself.

This is a strange and prevalent idea. The more I talk to intelligent young Christians, the more I find this peculiar attitude about God and prayer. There is something wrong about this Spartan piety whereby one feels that he should not pray for himself. That is rank heresy, and we should be done with it.

I have traveled thousands of miles for the United States Air Force as a mission preacher. From the top of Greenland up above the Arctic Circle, where it is 50° below zero, to the deserts of Africa, where it is 120° in the shade; from the front lines in Korea to the edge of the Iron Curtain in Berlin. I have discovered that the average GI wants one thing above all else in religion—to know how to pray for himself. His approach to God is human, humble, and normal—and healthy, I might add.

Why should you pray for yourself? Well, there are many reasons, but let me give you one. You cannot be a useful servant of Christ, or a helpful member of a family, or a true success in any field, if you do not have strength to give other people. Now there is no strength except that which comes

from God. Every ounce of energy that you have is God's gift and you know it. Therefore you need all the contact with God that you can get because you cannot give others what you do not have yourself.

Our Lord took people where He found them. And where was that? It was in a state of need. Whether you know it or not, that is where you are right now, regardless of your education, sophistication, financial affluence, high social or political position. You are in need of help from God and if you do not know it, you are even worse off than you realize. Jesus gave strength to the sick, the frustrated, the nervous, the crippled, the diseased, the poor, the blind, the despised, and the dreadfully sinful. They came to ask help for themselves. All He asked was an evidence of faith and a desire to be helped.

It was the purpose of Jesus to lift people above their state of necessity, to strengthen them, so in turn they could strengthen others. He said, "Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." As a matter of fact, He was delighted when people asked Him for help because He then knew that they were humble enough

to know that of themselves they did not have the strength to save themselves.

In my own experience, I pray mostly for physical, mental, and spiritual help. I do not happen to pray for material help very often because I don't need it at the present time. If I did need material help, I wouldn't hesitate for one second to ask God for it. After all, He told us that it was right to pray for our needs, physical as well as spiritual.

I happen to pray mostly for much needed qualities of character. I need to have better human relationships with other people. I have a heavy schedule and I need all the health I can possibly have. I need energy, understanding, tolerance, patience, and control over my temper. If I did not pray for myself with constant regularity, I could not do my job. I am too weak to get on without praying for courage, love, wisdom, faith, and health. The time to worry about myself is when I get so egotistical that I think I can get along without God's assistance. Then I am in real danger.

Let's think for just a minute about those misguided people who feel a sense of unworthiness in praying for themselves. There are two general answers to that problem. The first is that one

actually feels a sense of guilt that is so penetrating that he cannot face God. This is rather a morbid thing, and certainly Jesus Christ never meant anybody to feel that way. For those people, I am terribly sorry. The second reason is very subtle, and I got an answer to that from a clergyman in Pittsburgh. He said that he used to feel that it was selfish to ask God for things for himself. He struggled with the problem in despair for a long time. Then he saw the answer. It was this. He had not been able to pray for himself because of his own pride. He said that he swallowed his pride because when he told people that he did not pray for himself, it made him feel superior to those who did pray for themselves. In other words he was boasting about his humility in a very subtle way which even fooled himself. You see, he felt himself to be holier and humbler than the people who did pray for themselves. That is a strange one, isn't it?

Let us get back to this matter of guilt for just a minute. If you feel guilty in praying for yourself, it is really because you do not love yourself. Someone then says, "But isn't that selfish and wrong?" No, you are supposed to love yourself. The Bible says so. Our Lord, Jesus Christ, summarized the Law by commanding us to love our neighbors as

ourselves. Yet He did not tell us to love our neighbors only. He said that we must love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Therefore, He commanded us to love in three directions: (1) to God; (2) to neighbor; (3) to self.

Why? Because Christ knows only too well that if you do not love yourself, you will never be able to love your neighbor. He who hates himself hates everybody else. God is a realist. He does not give you abstract ideals that you cannot live up to. He knows human nature. After all, He made it, did He not? He takes you where you are and then leads you to where He wants you to go. He asks nothing of you that is morbid or impossible. He tells you that His yoke is easy and His burden light. Without Him, the burdens of life would eventually become unbearable. So you see, if you do not pray for yourself because you have a sense of guilt, it is probably because you have not asked for forgiveness and because you have not obeyed His command to love yourself as you love your neighbor.

In reality you are weak, powerless, and miserable without God. Before too long you will run out of the original deposit of energy that God gave you. If you do not seek to have it replenished by the

various means of grace that He offers to you, you will grow more and more ineffectual in your life. It is as though you were given a fine automobile with a tankful of gas, and naively you believed that the automobile would run on forever without a refill. No matter how fine the machine may be, it is powerless if the gas tank is empty. Before it can be of service to you, your automobile must have something to run on. It must be filled with fuel if it is to serve you. The more you pray for yourself, the more you can receive the energy to serve God and to love your neighbor. You see, you cannot give strength to others if you do not possess strength yourself.

But if you seek power only for your own selfish ends, and do not keep the power in circulation by giving it away, it will stop. The circuit points of spiritual power are (1) God; (2) others; (3) yourself. Love and strength must flow between these three points in order to maintain spiritual power.

With our Lord, all things are possible. I say that without reservation. But remember, He demands that we first use every available technique to help ourselves. Of course you must pray for yourself, but do not use God as a crutch. Do not ask God to do things for you that you can do for yourself.

A man came to see me the other day and wanted me to pray that his wife would be changed into a nicer woman. She was difficult. I knew her, and I admit it. I questioned him deeply, and found that he wanted a miracle to happen to her, but he did not want to do anything about it himself. Therefore he wanted to use God as a crutch, but he did not want to change his own life. That kind of praying, of course, is no good. The man should pray for help to be a better man so that his wife will find no blemish in him. So it is important to pray for yourself, but beware how you pray.

Finally, I would remind you again that our Lord permits you to ask Him for anything you desire. He demonstrated this in the Garden of Gethsemane after asking His Father if He might not be spared from the cup of agony that faced Him on Good Friday. That was a big request on the part of Jesus. However, He concluded His prayer by saying, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." You can pray for anything you want, no matter what, if you give it back to God, and accept His will and final decision, knowing that His wisdom is right and that one day you will understand the whole truth.

In short, let us never cease to pray for ourselves.

Let us never cease to ask God for anything we really need. And let us never cease to say, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Let us never cease to pray for the realization of Christ's presence within each one of us. For where He is, there is all the power available in the universe.

15

WHAT TO PRAY FOR

LET me give you a list of some of the most important qualities for successful spiritual living. If you have these characteristics, you can meet just about any problem there is in the world. They will assure you of certain victory.

First, pray that you know the truth about yourself. Let me ask you something. Do you really want to know the whole truth about yourself? Not only do we hide unfavorable traits from others, but we hide them from ourselves. Anyone who is running away from the facts about himself is asking for trouble.

Suppose you took your automobile into the shop because the engine was running improperly. You expect the mechanic to open the hood and find out what is wrong, do you not? You want the facts, and you hope they will not be too bad. What about yourself? Is everything all right with you? Are you blaming somebody else for your troubles? Are you willing to look under the hood

of your disguise and face yourself as you really are? It is not easy. I do not like it one bit. The Bible says, "The truth shall make you free." Free from what? Free from those corroding characteristics that break life on the hard rocks of the reality of living.

I know a father who is having trouble with one of his sons. Why? Because he tries to dominate the boy. The father tries to do his son's thinking and planning and living for him. The youngster has never had a chance to grow up and become himself. So the boy is filled with a paralyzing inferiority complex. He is disgruntled, dissatisfied, and cannot study. It is definitely the father's fault, but the father is blaming the boy for being stupid and weak. The tragedy is that even though the father is an important leader, he refuses to face the truth about himself. Eventually many people are going to suffer for that father's blind willfulness. All the old man needs is a little humility and the grace of God, and he will see the truth. How about you? Do you want to know the truth about yourself?

Second, pray for a holy indifference to the people who either praise or criticize you unjustly. You and I are constantly looking for a pat on the

back, are we not? We love to have people praise us and rub our fur the right way. Scheming people realize this, and they build up our egos and butter us up when we do not deserve it.

On the other hand, many of us are hurt by criticism. Why not thank both our friends and our enemies when they point out characteristics that are weak or that may lead us to trouble? John Wesley and Ignatius Loyola, both great spiritual leaders, never ceased to thank their friends and their enemies when they revealed and criticized weaknesses. Can you take criticism? Will you take it joyfully? That is a prayer worth praying for yourself.

Third, pray to remain calm and unmoved when your plans are thwarted. The world is full of monkey-wrench throwers, people who love to destroy your plans and frustrate your hopes. Realize that it makes little difference to the world's welfare if your personal plans do happen to be thwarted, because God's eternal plan will always work out. If your plans are a part of His, they cannot lose.

If your plans are selfish and willful, then you can expect trouble. You may have enough will power to accomplish them for a little while, but eventually they will break down. You cannot defy

God and His universal purpose. Neither can any man defy God by standing in your way if your plans are God's. You may be stopped, but only for a moment or two. So do not worry about upset plans. Pray God that He reveal His plans for you and that you have the grace to seek to fulfill them. Then you cannot lose.

Fourth, pray to recognize the fact that behind all opposition there is some reason. Sometimes opposition is provoked by our own lack of wisdom, sometimes by our own stupidity, sometimes by our own selfishness.

At times you are called upon to stand like a rock against all opposition, because it is for Christ's sake. The pages of history are packed with men and women who have stood for the things that Christ stands for. They have been bitterly persecuted, but they have always won in the end. God never fails.

Fifth, pray for the strength to meet every crisis in life and to rejoice over the fact that last week's crises are ended and forgotten. My job is to try to lead a diocese composed of eighty churches and a number of institutions. It seems to me that when I expect it least, things begin to happen and trouble breaks out somewhere. Hardly a day

goes by without some kind of critical occurrence within our 9,000 square miles of territory. Therefore, I must try to develop a sense of inward calm at all times. That is difficult for me to do. If I am shaken with emotion every time a crisis arises, I will soon be knocked out. If I am thrown off balance every few hours because of some new and bitter experience with willful human beings, then I am going to be a sick man. I cannot afford to pray less than one hour a day if I hope to meet problems as they arise. Are you inwardly prepared today for the next crisis that may come? It may arise within the hour. Pray to be prepared.

Sixth, pray to appeal to people on a basis of the best that is within them. The Kingdom of God resides in every man. Man has two natures, one good and the other evil. If you appeal to the bad, the bad will respond quicker than you can believe. If you appeal to the good, the good will respond, and both you and the person to whom you appeal will be blessed. Sometimes the good seems to be slower in its response than the bad. I do not know why. You do not seem to have to study to be bad, but you do have to study to be good. The road to destruction is easy to find. There are many people to point out the way. The road to

salvation is difficult, but, in the long run, it is the shortest and quickest road to the peace of God.

Realize that Christ is in every man, no matter who that man is. Unite yourself with Christ in the other fellow, and you will begin to find unity, peace, and concord.

Seventh, pray to have the courage to inflict pain, when it is necessary, and to have compassion to heal the wounds and assist in the recuperation. The surgeon in a crisis does not hesitate to cut deeply to save life. The same surgeon also insists on good post-operative care for the patient. It is important to learn to be an impartial administrator of both punishment and comfort when the need arises. So pray to have the courage to inflict pain when necessary, and to tend the wounds with compassion.

Eighth, pray to remember that God has an answer for everything. That is a necessary attitude toward life, if you are to live it successfully. There is not a single problem on earth today for which God does not have an answer. If we attack problems with our reason alone, we discover all too often that our brains are inadequate. If brains could save us today, we would have peace throughout the world. We need more than brains. We need

the power of God to bring peace into our hearts, peace to each other, peace throughout the world. Peace is the gift of God, and not a product of reason.

Ninth, pray to rely on God for strength as we try to fulfill the responsibilities He has placed upon us. Know this—that if we rely only upon our own human power, we will eventually fail. No man is strong enough to live by his own power, for there is no power but of God. Every breath that you and I take comes from God, and without breath there is no life. Pray to rely on God's strength and not your own, and a lot of nervous tension will be taken off your shoulders.

Tenth, pray to know how to put first things first. It is easy to place the main emphasis on trivialities and to leave the important things undone. Most of the trouble that you now have is of a minor order. You and I get concerned over little things. We get angry over inconsequential matters and we alienate ourselves from our friends over points which are not worth fighting about. Pray to know what is important. Pray to know how to put first things first.

Eleventh, pray to undertake only the responsibilities that belong to you, not those that belong

to somebody else. It is a beguiling temptation to worry about the duties of other people. My job, for example, operates on a constitutional basis with various committees and commissions, each under a leader of its own. Now if I try to take over the responsibilities of each one of these committees, it means that I am meddling with responsibilities that are not mine. Thus, I am worrying about things I am not supposed to worry about. I am butting into other people's business. Pray for wisdom and light to keep your attention fixed upon your own responsibilities and not to meddle with those of others, unless you are asked for help.

Twelfth, pray to remember that God gave you a sense of humor. In the long run, the forces of evil are ineffective, and it is silly to meet trouble with hatred or resentment. More than anything else, the devil hates to be laughed at, so pray for a sense of humor in every crisis. Learn to laugh at the devil and many of your troubles will fade away. Remember that a sense of humor is a God-given grace. Pray for it.

PRAYER FROM THE HEART

SOMETIMES implicit faith in a supposedly objective fact will work practical wonders even though the "fact" be untrue. The Rev. Louis Tucker, in *Clerical Errors*, tells the story of his father's ministry in the South, which represents exactly what I mean. One day a parishioner approached the old rector and said, "John, my husband, is a Catholic and a chronic invalid. A week ago, while he was asleep, the express man brought a package to the house. In it, very carefully packed, was a whiskey flask full of muddy water. I thought it was a poor practical joke by someone, so I poured the water out and threw the flask away. Next day came a special delivery letter from a friend of John's who had made a pleasure trip abroad. It seems that John, knowing that his friend would pass through Rome, had asked him to bring back a flask of water blessed by the Pope. John's friend was also going to the Holy Land. There he filled the only empty container he had with him with Jordan River

water—filled it himself, personally, at a ford—came back to Rome and asked the Pope to bless it for a sick man. This the Pope did. John then read the letter to me and asked if the water had come.”

“What did you do?”

“Fortunately, I had not destroyed the box it came in nor the wrapping. I hunted up the flask, filled it with muddy water from a puddle, put it back in its box and wrappings, and brought it to him, saying that I had opened it to make sure what it was. Before I could stop him he drank it.”

“Drank it?”

“Yes, and it cured him. He has been well ever since. Oh, what shall I tell him?”

“Tell him nothing; keep quiet, madam, even if it kills you. You say he is well?”

“Completely cured, and has been ever since.”

“He could not have been cured by Jordan River water blessed by the Pope, but he thinks he was. Madam, his faith has saved him. Be at peace.”

Here is a case where the thoughts of the heart were so consistent in their unwavering belief that water from the River Jordan blessed by the Pope would make a man well, that a cure actually happened. The God-given “heart” instrument was in co-operation with a positive program. Even though

the supposed fact upon which the concept was based was false, Divine Grace transcended the materialistic inaccuracy and effected a cure anyway. Obviously there are innumerable and unknown spiritual laws in the operation of such a case. Beyond this point it is difficult to rationalize and understand these laws—and likewise unnecessary. Suffice it to say that the right “heart” condition and attitude toward God’s power is enough to perform daily miracles that our modern scepticism does not dare comprehend.

God has provided us with this remarkable equipment that works with automatic precision “according to our faith.” This mysterious mechanism seems to have an all-powerful influence over the body and soul and in recent years has been studied by psychologists who use the phrase “subconscious mind” and other terms. Yet there is nothing new about this hidden instrument as the Bible and the Church have long had a clear knowledge of its operations. Trace, for example, the spiritual and psychological meaning of the term “heart” in religious literature. Through the Old and New Testament and the liturgies of tradition you will see that it generally refers to that all-powerful organ of the psyche wherein reside the sum total deposits of our inner attitudes toward life.

Those attitudes, in so far as they remain constant in the heart, sooner or later tend to be fulfilled in the objective world. The "heart" is an impersonal agent that has great capacity for exerting power. It never ceases to assist us in achieving the goal given it by our will and conscious mentality. We must realize that we are in a constant state of prayer according to our desires and wants. These subconscious promptings are the prayers of our hearts that, unbeknown to us, are perpetually offered to our respective gods. These gods are of self, gold, flesh, power, and pride; or else the true Divinity of our Lord. Idolatry and the worship of false gods have only one end throughout the Bible: namely, chaos.

Most prayers or desires of the heart are answered if they are strong and persistent enough. Too often these unconscious prayers are to false gods. But unless based on the will of God, they ultimately carry the individual petition to destruction. It must be remembered that beyond this great and powerful instrument of the heart there is an all-powerful transcendent grace that rules every aspect of life. True prayer approaches God with a heart that is in accord with the will of God as manifested in Jesus Christ.

Colonel John Alison is one of our great Air Force

fighter pilots. He taught the Russians to fly American P-40's; he assembled planes and taught flying in Persia; and he was Squadron Commander of the famous 75th in China under General Chenault. He has the Distinguished Service Cross, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Purple Heart, the Silver Star, and the Air Medal. He feels that war is a dirty, but necessary, business, and since he has chosen it as a life profession, that he has no right to ask God for personal protection. Yet he feels that he can pray for the men who fly for him. He has a very definite belief in God's Divine Providence. He is perfectly sure that he would not have lived without this Providence. It is not given to the man who does not claim it by steadfast belief in its reality, he feels. Therefore, according to this flier's faith in the mystery that he does not try to explain, strength and aid were given him. Yet he knows that men of far greater faith are lost in combat, and he believes that in such instances it is because God wants them for greater service in a far wider field of existence.

Here is the perfect reciprocal relationship between a simple courageous soldier and God, which is the basis of all true prayer. It is far more than a mere psychological phase. It is, first, a deep-seated sense of the existence of God's Providence, and,

secondly, it is met with a quick response of supernatural assistance that he does not even feel worthy to request. Yet "God's will be done" is the slogan and spirit. Here is the centurion (who had such great faith in Jesus) in modern dress, and if you could hear the details of Colonel Alison's life, you would see that the miraculous is as fully demonstrated as in the centurion's case. The power of prayer rests in a deeply rooted desire in the human heart. That desire is, "Thy will be done."

17

PENCILS, POSTURES, AND PRAYER

A NOTEBOOK and pencil can become a great help in private prayer. God speaks to us in so many different ways and at such odd hours that we need to train ourselves in the art of listening and recording when ideas appear. They may or may not be from Him, but record and examine them. There is an old Chinese saying that the strongest memory is weaker than the palest ink. Many of us ordinary people just can't recall some of the strongest thoughts that come to us, and therefore we often lose elements of truth. All truth, great or small, is important. Jot it down when it comes, test it later on in the day, for it may be from God. You can't afford to let good ideas get away from you for they may never come back. Hook them, bring them into the boat, and measure them. If they are unworthy, throw them back.

Naturally, you must train yourself to realize that a state of prayer never totally leaves the person who

seeks to discipline himself in the art. You don't just pray and live in separate watertight compartments. You mix the two so that God naturally floods His wisdom through all the ordinary details of living.

Some of the greatest early Americans were in the habit of keeping journals. Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson kept elaborate notes on life and religion so that they were forever growing in grace with the discipline of a pencil. They recorded their own spiritual experiences as they related to their work and greatly believed in the Providence of God as He revealed His will in their lives.

Yet not all personalities work the same way and there is no doubt that, for some, the notebook and pencil would be a hindrance. However, don't include yourself in that latter category until you have asked yourself a question or two. Do you rebel against a spiritual journal because you are lazy? Do you dislike the idea because you never want to see in print that which you might think is unworthy of you? Is pride making you excuse yourself from a bit of spiritual bookkeeping? Are you afraid to face yourself? If these or other subtle escapes are the reasons for not writing down your

thoughts about God and yourself, then be sure to keep a record.

A personal journal of spiritual notations can become a powerful reference book, especially when one is in need of strength, for it is a compendium of what means most to you. It recalls the ideas that were previously helpful at a time when you probably were going through difficulties, and invariably they come back with fresh meaning and impact. The habit of writing has a powerful effect upon the subconscious and builds up automatic spiritual reflexes so that you have a reserve within you that is always latent for the next daily crisis.

The following list will give you an idea of what might be the contents of such a personal book of prayer and private devotion.

1. *Biography*. Notes about people who have found spiritual strength and the various ways in which it has been developed. Just from casual reading you can soon build up a tremendous fund of strong events and sayings which relate to the power of God in the lives of men and women.

2. *Bible Texts* that appeal to your needs.

3. *Ideas* that come from your own consciousness which ought to be recorded. Unless you make a habit of setting them down, you will probably lose

some of the best thoughts that have ever crossed your mind, many of which are the promptings of God Himself.

4. *Daily Events* that have some spiritual connotation and from which you can gain wisdom.

5. *Sins and Mistakes* and how to avoid them next time.

6. *Virtues and Accomplishments*, which prove the laws of spiritual living. They build up a residue of testimony to God which serves as a basis for faith and confidence.

Now let us discuss some of the physical environments and postures that may assist you or hinder you in your prayers.

It is very important to remember that you need not feel bound by any dogmatic custom of posture when you pray in private. Sometimes we have a fetish way back in our minds which seems to tell us that unless we assume a particular bodily position, our prayers will not be valid. The first principle of prayer is to be close to God, which requires sincerity of heart before it demands bodily conformity. The second principle is that the posture should be in keeping with the time, place, situation, and objective.

When you turn your thoughts to God, you

should be spiritually free and unhampered, no matter where you are or what you are doing. Ritual should not inhibit but enhance. So, you can pray when hanging on a strap in a bus, when sitting in a meeting or a movie, when lying down in bed, or when walking on the street. Prayer is acceptable to God under any condition where you can give a fleeting mental glance in His direction for praise, petition, or confession. You may not even have time to put it in words but only to offer God a thought. On the other hand, you may be in situations where your posture is due to remain fixed for some time and where you have quite a few minutes when you can pray, such as sitting on a train, or lying in bed when you can't sleep. The point is: pray when and where you can. "Pray without ceasing."

However, don't become lazy and undisciplined by making train-riding and bed-lying your habitual posture for private prayer. The weakness of the flesh will many times tempt you to tumble into bed on a night when you come home exhausted. It takes only a few nights of "bed-praying" to form a habit which can replace prayer by a vague sleepiness. It isn't the fact that you are in bed that matters, but that you have been disrespectful enough to address

and petition the Almighty as a regular habit under the laziest possible conditions. When you go to bed with a book, intending to pray on your knees before you put out your light, you are not fooling God. Few prayers of value are said after your book begins to get heavy. There is only one sure way of good bedtime prayers. Get on your knees at the bedside before you climb in between the sheets with a book and a questionable intention.

For regular daily petitions on behalf of my family, my diocese, my friends, the world, and the departed, I take to my knees. That is part of one's formal daily discipline, but do not limit such prayers, even though they be brief thoughts, to the kneeling posture. One can add to the list or repeat the list any time, any place, and under any conditions. But if you don't say these prayers at a specific time and in a particular posture, you may not say them at all.

I find that meditation and Bible reading is best for me when I am sitting comfortably but fairly upright in a favorite chair. (A prayer corner in the house can become a hallowed spot, a place of power.) The point about meditation is that one can progress better when one does not have to think about time or bodily discomfort. Good ascetic

monks can kneel for hours and be far out of this world for they have trained their bodies to be under strict discipline, but, for most of us, a good seat is more conducive to spiritual thinking than an aching back or sore knees. But if you can kneel and meditate, so much the better.

On the whole, this matter of posture is not too important in prayer unless we make it a ritualistic end in itself or a lazy man's semi-spiritual siesta which ends in the seamy satisfaction of having fulfilled the letter of the law. The point is this: pray, pray, and pray some more, either on your knees, in a chair, out at dinner, on the bus, on the sidewalk, at the movies, or in a shop. In everything, pray. "Pray without ceasing."

18

COMPANION TO AFFLICTION

THE TRAGEDY of invalidism strikes many homes, and no one knows the time or the season of its possible appearance. Yet it may not always be a tragedy in the long view, for some remarkable human twists for the good of everyone concerned are sometimes forthcoming. What comes out of the visitation of serious illness usually depends upon the attitudes established concerning the affliction, both on the part of the one who is ill (unless he be an infant) and on the part of those in the family who must live *with* and care *for* the patient.

At this point the parish church should be fully prepared to be of the utmost help. It is our purpose here to consider the mental health of those in the family who must be associated with the problem day after day, night after night. Usually it is one family member in particular who carries the heaviest load both of heart and hand. For this person it

is hard to continue in prayer, to maintain a strong faith, and to wait endlessly on the afflicted.

To you who are one of those called upon to serve constantly, we would say that you should not feel guilty about the fact that you may not be able to feel the effectiveness of your prayers. Often, you are so fatigued and bewildered that you cannot even concentrate long enough to pray. No, don't worry about that, for some of us Church people should do that end for you. Yet if you can pray under the circumstances, so much the better. Our point is that we would have you see two spiritual concepts, or at least try to see them, for they help to create the general atmosphere of healing both of mind and body.

The first concept is that no matter how badly damaged the physical body may be, either from birth or infancy or by a disease that came later in life, the soul created by God is made in His Image and cannot be crippled except by constant and willful sin that refuses repentance. The physical body is the temporary instrument through which the eternal and indestructible soul is assigned to express itself for its split-second span here on earth. Life is a school and the physical body is one of the classrooms through which we pass, and should it

burn down or be destroyed it does not finally affect the student. You must believe that the eternal spirit, while possibly prevented from making normal expression through the damaged flesh, is still made in God's Image. This should be especially visualized in the case of damage that has been done to the physical brain cells or the nervous system. Like a broken radio, the program is still being perfectly transmitted through the air into the defective instrument.

Secondly, try not to hold any resentment against God, luck, or the sick one. How natural and understandable it is to harbor an inner grudge against the situation. How human it is to fight against it inwardly. Resentment is almost an automatic response in many of us, but the problem with it is that it spreads a poison to the afflicted, to all who come near the household, and most especially to yourself. Resentment makes for a frightening series of future circumstances. So pray that you can think of the afflicted one as God created the soul, not damaged but whole and in His Image. Pray that you may be freed from all resentment.

We of the Church should do the rest for you, although, as we said, if you can pray, do so by all means. On the whole, the Church has universally

neglected this all-important mission of having carefully trained prayer groups that will make constant intercession for you and your family. We know of a few instances in the Church where clergy have devoted many hours to the upbuilding of these spiritual cells of people who literally become instruments whereby the cleansing Fire of the Spirit is caused to flood the entire household with new life.

When we celebrate the Holy Communion, for example, we direct the healing power of the Mystical Presence of the Sacrament to the family for any problem of mind, body, or estate. While prayers are being offered for the afflicted and the family, it is to be remembered that we who pray will not venture to say how they will be answered or in what form. That they will be answered, we are completely confident. Power will be given the spirit, mind, and body of both the patient and the family. So God's power will flow, though we know not the form of its expression, for we do not yet perceive all the laws of the Divine Economy. However, this we do know and believe: that there is no illness of the body or mind that He cannot heal and, furthermore, that He wants all men, women, and children to be whole, joyous, and strong.

19

HOW TO MAKE A DYNAMIC COMMUNION

HOW to make a Dynamic Communion" is a presumptuous title. Yet it is possible to make a Dynamic Communion even if I can't give you clear and simple instructions as to the "how." At any rate, these hints may be helpful when you seek strength through the overwhelming Power of Christ, who comes to us so simply and personally at His Holy Table.

The power of His presence is there, believe it. Realize that the energies and wisdom that stand back of creation are awaiting your visit to the altar rail. Know that through this power nothing is impossible. You are not approaching a mere symbol—you are approaching the heart of universal reality. God has come down to meet *you*.

Know what you need before you go to the altar rail. Do you understand yourself, or are you blind to your weaknesses? Do pride and the fear of facing the truth about yourself prevent you from

becoming a normal, healthy, balanced, and spiritually alert personality? Be objective with yourself and know your weak points. Perhaps these include temper, pride, fear, or dishonesty. Be specific and try to remember where and when you broke God's rules. Then ask His forgiveness, and go to the altar with a request for the opposite positive virtues: control, humility, courage, and truth. Which virtue do you need the most? Ask for forgiveness for the mistake and strength to receive the powerful replacement.

Be specific about the virtue and narrow it down to the one you need most. Don't try to receive all the virtues at once. One at a time will do. Therefore, if you need courage, go to the Holy Communion with a specific or special intention asking God to fill you with that divine quality.

There are other special intentions for which you might put in a request: a special prayer for an individual who has a specific need; a desire to offer thanksgiving for some particular benefit; a desire to have one of your problematical situations enlightened by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit; or a particular intention for an anniversary such as a wedding, Baptism, Confirmation, graduation, or special event that has happened in your life. Most

especially you can attend the Holy Communion with a particular desire to remember someone in Paradise. You can be close to them, actually with them, at the Communion Service.

Go to the early service whenever possible. We do not suggest this because our Lord is more present at eight o'clock in the morning than at eleven o'clock. We go early whenever possible because it requires sacrifice and love to climb out of bed and honor our Lord with our presence when we want to sleep for another hour. There is great value in attending the early Communion Service before breakfast. Not because our Lord is more available then than after breakfast, but because you are giving first place to the spiritual meal, and second place to the physical appetite. The great mystics of all time have found the early morning service the most productive of spiritual power. So one might quietly discipline himself in accordance with the best experience of praying men throughout the ages and seek God at His altar in the first morning hours.

Make a regular habit of going to Communion on specific days. In other words, organize your spiritual life as you would organize your home life. See that spiritual meals are visited regularly and on time.

Do not forget your Communion and wait until you are visited by some tragedy and then seek God's help when it is virtually too late. Preventive medicine, when it relates to the spirit or the body, is common sense.

When Christ comes to the Communion rail, He visits all sorts and conditions of men, and you are therefore a part of the common Christian brotherhood. That means that all races and creeds, nationalities, kinds, and kindreds, are of one spiritual blood. Christ dwells in the heart of every man who seeks Him with sincerity, and the communicant becomes a part of the world brotherhood of Christians. This does not mean that you are requested to let would-be Christians abuse their privileges. It means that you are going to serve Christ's children, to whatever degree would be best for them.

So, a Dynamic Communion awaits you. Whether you know it or not, you need the power that is presented at our altars. That power does not depend on the priest or celebrant who is the medium through which Christ appears. You may not like the teller at the bank window, but the money that passes through his hands is none the less valid. Always know that the Sacrament of the Holy Com-

munion does not depend on the personality of the celebrant; the power awaits you through Christ's magnificent gift of Himself. He will be at the altar of your church with regularity. Do you avail yourself of this awe-inspiring privilege with regularity, faith, and specific intention of purpose? Don't deny yourself this power; you must have it to live in these times.

The Holy Communion is, above all, a source of grace. It is the service that our Lord personally instituted and through which He promised to be with us in His very Real Presence until the end of time. The more faithfully we receive His power in the Sacrament, with due preparation, the more adequate we will be in meeting the problems we face daily. Obviously, there are many other means of grace, but here is a tangible and concrete method that is impersonal and rewarding. In it we do not depend upon the personality of the priest, for our Lord Himself is truly present with all His power to give us the strength to meet any situation.